Attitudes to the Living Natural World in the Synoptic Tradition

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The following thesis is the result of my own research and I am the sole author.

Attitudes to the Living Natural World in the Synoptic Tradition. (Abstract).

The argument of the thesis is that, in the Synoptic tradition, Jesus is portrayed as having a broadly sympathetic attitude to the 'Living Natural World' and that there is no significant difference in any of the three Synoptic Gospels in the way he is portrayed in this respect.

In the thesis, the term 'Living Natural World' denotes animals and plants, including domestic animals. (There was no clear-cut division between wild and domestic animals in the Jewish world [*m. Kil.* 8.6]). Since the work covers a range of texts, there is no discussion of historical Jesus scholarship, instead the thesis concentrates on how Jesus is perceived by his followers. The thesis follows the consensus that Matthew and Luke each used Q and Mark, as well as extra material peculiar to themselves.

A number of key texts are discussed: these have been chosen to give a balance between those which appear to display a more positive approach to the Natural World, such as 'the lost sheep' (Luke 15:4-6; and //) and those which appear to display a more negative approach like 'the Gerasene swine' (Mark 5:1-20; and //). Synoptic texts referring to animals are very often figurative references to people. To resolve the tension between the symbolic and the literal, the thesis employs two methods. The historical-critical approach looks at the realities of the living animal or plant and its place in the Jewish world, while the exegetical literary approach

examines what the symbolism conveys to the reader and the implied attitude contained in the reference to the animal or plant.

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Finally, I should say that any faults or demerits in the work are my own.

Christine Brown

Abbreviations

AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
Anc Soc	*Ancient Society*
ATR	*Anglican Theological Review*
Bib	*Biblica*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BAR	Biblical Archaeology Series
BAGD	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. Danker, Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament
BDB	F.Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament
BDF	F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R.W. Funk, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library*
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly.*
DR	*Downside Review.*
ETL	*Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensum*
Eph Arch	*Ephemeris Archaiologike.*
Ex Au	*Ex Auditu*
Exp Tim	*Expository Times*
GTJ	*Grace Theological Journal*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*

IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JESHO	*Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JOTS	*Journal of Old Testament Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JThS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LQHR	*London Quarterly and Holburn Review*
LSJ	Liddell-Scott-Jones, Greek-English Lexicon
LXX	Septuagint
MM	Moulton and Milligan, Vocabulary of the Greek Testament
MT	Massoretic Text
Nov T	*Novum Testamentatum*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PJ	Palästinajahrbuch
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
Rev Q	*Revue de Qumran*
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

ThLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
VD	*Verbum Domini*
VT	*Vetus Testamentatum*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Introduction

Definition of the title, statement of the argument, reasons for choice of subject, methodology (including problems raised by the nature of the thesis).

Definition of the Title

First of all, we should like to define what we understand as 'the Living Natural World'. We have deliberately avoided the use of the term 'creation', which can refer to the act of creation whether understood as an event or as a continuous process. We have also avoided the use of the word 'nature', as this is a Greek concept (φύσις) and not a Hebrew one (Hughes 1994, 58). The term 'Natural World' without qualification includes not only living organisms, but also the land, water and air which the organisms inhabit. To narrow the scope of the thesis, we have chosen to deal with texts that refer to the living organisms, in other words, animals and, to a lesser extent, plants. Since animals and plants do not live in a vacuum, we have described briefly the setting of the lands of Israel with its natural features, vegetation and crops in a prologue to provide a framework for the rest of the thesis. The term 'Natural World' by definition means the non-human world. However, we have taken some liberty with the term in the thesis to make it include domestic animals. Although, in some respects, domestic animals may be closer to the human world than to the 'natural' world, such animals themselves are not human. Moreover, the care of domestic flocks and their protection from predators was a significant factor in attitudes to wild animals. Most importantly (from the point of view of the thesis) the Jews regarded some animals such as dogs and wild oxen as being on the boundary

line between domestic and wild animals. Thus the division between the wild animal and the domestic animal was not clear cut (*m. Kil.* 8.6).

Secondly, we should like to state what we understand by the Synoptic tradition. It is a given that the Gospels were written years after the death of Jesus and were formed from oral traditions which were then collected, written and edited. There is also a consensus that each of the Gospels has an individually distinctive style and even theological agenda. The Gospel of Matthew, for example, makes more extensive use of the Hebrew Scriptures (including Septuagintal forms) than either the Gospel of Luke or Mark (Davies and Allison 1988-97, 1:29-31). We follow the consensus that Matthew and Luke each used Mark and Q (the Quelle of material common to both Matthew and Luke): and also that both Matthew and Luke used extra material peculiar to themselves, known traditionally as 'M' and 'L'. Further discussion of the approach to the Synoptic evangelists is to be found under the section on methodology called 'The Synoptic Tradition and Jesus'.

The Argument

Our argument is that, in the Synoptic tradition, Jesus is portrayed as having a broadly sympathetic attitude to the 'Living Natural World' and that there is no *significant* difference in any of the three Synoptic Gospels in the way he is portrayed in this respect. We intend to demonstrate that this sympathetic attitude may be deduced from texts such as 'the lost sheep' (Luke 15:4-7// Matt 18: 10-14), 'the animal in the pit' (Matt 12:11// Luke 14:5), and the Markan version of the Palm Sunday colt (Mark 11: 2-3). In these texts Jesus is depicted, at the very least, as being in

agreement with a favourable attitude shown to the animals concerned. For example in the case of the casualty in the pit, the animal is actually rescued on the Sabbath in the words attributed to Jesus. In a similar fashion in the story of the lost sheep, there is concern for the individual sheep, just as there is concern for the individual human being that the sheep represents. We intend to demonstrate that such an ethos of care for domestic animals was derived from Hebrew scripture and that later Rabbinic tracts also supported such an interpretation. We note that such tracts were written later than the first century CE, yet they were derived from the oral halakah of the praxis that was in place in the first century CE.

It is not only domestic animals, however, that figure in the evangelists' accounts of the words and deeds of Jesus. We will be arguing that a positive interpretation may also be given to the phrase '...and he was with the wild animals...' (Mark 1:13b). Again we will produce arguments that such an interpretation may be derived from passages in Hebrew scripture. In a similar fashion we will argue for an interpretation of a favourable attitude towards other wild creatures from the stance of providential care. Such texts include 'the birds and the lilies' (Matt 6: 26-30// Luke 12: 24-28), and 'the sparrows' (Luke 12: 6// Matt 10:29).

We will also be examining under close scrutiny other texts that, at first sight, appear to have a pejorative approach. In some cases we will argue for a more neutral stance. In the text pertaining to the eagles (Matt 24:28// Luke 17:37), for example, we will be arguing the possibility that the text was a proverb and as such had no pejorative force against the birds themselves. The Gerasene pigs (Mark 5: 1-20// Matt 8: 24-

34// Luke 8: 26-39) and the cursing of the fig tree (Mark 11: 13-14, 20-21// Matt 21: 18-21) are also apparently pejorative towards the Natural World. We will be arguing that, here, the evangelists were prepared to present Jesus as taking such an approach for reasons which were connected with the events of the latter half of the first century CE.

Reasons for the choice of subject

Humanity's attitudes towards the Natural World have inspired a variety of recent scholarly approaches. Here is a small representative selection of such approaches with some of their leading exponents. Neither the list of approaches nor that of the writers is intended to be fully comprehensive. Rolston's work on philosophy and the environment has employed a fascinating combination of knowledge of the natural sciences with work on ethical philosophy (1999). Austins's series on environmental theology provides some interesting insights, particularly into the North American viewpoint (1988). In the area of systematic theology, theologians such as Page (1996) have made valuable contributions to the Christian perspective on environmental theology. Linzey (1994) has specialised in theology and sentient animals. Some have taken a more holistic approach to the integration of humanity, animal and God in theology: Murray (1992) is one example. The omission of other famous names is no reflection on those theologians who have made notable contributions in any of the above fields. Valuable as are all these approaches, however, they have one thing in common: they view the Natural World from the perspective of the present day. Although theologians do refer to biblical texts they tend to use them to give support to a suggested way of looking at our world; they do

not look to see the relevance of such texts in their original time and place. The latter approach belongs to biblical scholarship.

Unfortunately, there has been a lamentable lack of interest in the Natural World among biblical scholars. In the field of New Testament Studies, established scholars such as Stuhlmacher (1987) and Bauckham (1994) have written articles and essays on the Natural World. Nevertheless, to my knowledge, there has been no major work produced in this field. Certainly, Gemünden (1993b) has written from a literary viewpoint and on plant life only: the work does not cover animal life and is not concerned with attitudes to the real plants. Linzey (1991) takes a very brief look at those sayings, attributed to Jesus, which relate to animals, but the work is aimed very much at a general readership.

The present thesis is a foray into this neglected area. Obviously one thesis cannot cover all aspects of the subject, but it is a beginning. The approach to the subject as a whole and the approach to various elements within the subject are discussed in the methodology below.

Methodology: Key Points

In the following paragraphs we will be discussing:

(a) a brief description of the approach to the argument

(b) symbolism versus realism and their influence on the methods used

(c) the Synoptic tradition and Jesus

(d) sources (I) Hebrew scripture and the reasons for including two of the excursuses

(II) Qumran, New Testament and Patristic writings

(III) Graeco-Roman material

(e) miscellaneous points

The argument for the use of biological and botanical data and scientific nomenclature is given in a separate section following the introduction.

(a) A Brief Description of the Approach to the Argument

As we indicated earlier, in selecting key texts to be discussed, we have attempted to achieve a balance between those that appear to display a more positive attitude to the Natural World (as defined in the thesis) and those that appear to display a more negative attitude. An example of the positive attitude is the story of the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7; Matt 18:10-14) while an example of the negative is the account of the Gerasene swine (Mark 5:1-20; Matt 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-29). Each of these key texts is discussed in a separate chapter (see contents page). Where relevant, other texts are included that may have a bearing on the subject of the key text. Since the thesis is covering a range of texts in order to depict various possible attitudes, these texts cannot be given the rigorous and very detailed treatment that a thesis dealing with one text only would involve. To use the analogy of an archaeological trench, the thesis is cutting down through several layers each of which will be examined: it is not possible to excavate the entire site completely layer by layer.

Since there is only a small corpus of New Testament scholarship directly pertinent to the thesis, there is a wider range of both type and date of material consulted than would normally be used. At times it has been necessary to refer to older material. For

example, there is no recent work on the details pertinent to the care of the flock (Luke 15:4; Matt 18:12), while the shepherd sought the missing sheep (Bishop 1962; Bussby 1963). If we are to look at the natural world in the Synoptic gospels, then it is surely desirable that we know something of that natural world relevant to the time and the place. In order to convey that knowledge, we have made use of books on natural history. There is more said on this topic in the argument for the use of scientific nomenclature in the thesis.

(b) Symbolism versus realism

In the Synoptic gospels, references to the Natural world and to animals, in particular, are often figurative rather than literal. In trying to ascertain the underlying attitude to the animal or plant in question, there has to be a resolving of the tension between this symbolism and the physical reality of the living animal (or plant). Symbolism is used here as an umbrella term covering all instances where animals are referred to in a figurative sense: in other words, symbolism is inclusive of allegory, simile and metaphor. Such references range from the simple allusion to the size of a camel (Matt 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25) to the involved symbolism of the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch. (Although the Animal Apocalypse is not part of the Synoptic tradition, there are sections in it which permit useful comparisons with the texts in the Synoptic gospels, for example the reference to gentiles as 'dogs' in 1 Enoch 89.42). Thus, on the one hand, in the physical world of pasture, tilled field, vineyard and the outlying wilderness, the animals and plants of this physical world, whether domestic or wild, live and die as animals or plants. On the other hand, in the symbolic world of parable and aphorism, the animals and plants are representative of

people. For example, of the range of Synoptic texts referring to sheep, most are really referring to people either in a metaphor (Matt 10:6) or in a simile (Matt 9:36).

In order to resolve the tension between the symbolic and the literal, we will be making use of two complementary approaches – the literary exegetical and the historical critical. The literary exegetical approach allows us to examine more fully the symbolism of the texts, and ascertain what this symbolism meant in relation to the animals mentioned 'Metaphors are non-literal are they not?' (Templeton 1999, 22). The historical critical approach allows us to look in more detail at the physical realities of plant and animal, and at issues such as geographical location and economic and cultural conditions that are pertinent to our understanding of the texts. For example in the exchange between the Syrophoenician woman and Jesus, we consider cultural differences in their respective attitudes to dogs (Mark 7:24-30// Matt 15: 21-28). In the discussion of the same text, we also examine the word 'dogs' in its symbolic sense and also as a philological term.

The interpretation of each text is determined partly by its context. Since the same text may have different contexts in different Gospels, this also may affect our understanding of how the creature mentioned in the text is to be regarded. Moreover, we may need to allow not only for the context of a saying in a given gospel but also its possible context in the oral teaching of Jesus. For example, in Matthew 24:28// Luke 17:37, do we understand the 'eagles' to be real carrion eaters or is this word a subtle allusion to the Roman Legions? It may be that the context of the Parousia in

the Matthean version will lead us to a different conclusion from that which we reach from the context of judgement in the Lukan version.

(c) The Synoptic Tradition and Jesus.

We are prescinding from 'the historical Jesus question' even although 'we are in the midst of a revived and large-scale scholarly effort to investigate Jesus of Nazareth historically' (Hurtado 1997, 272). There are two reasons for this decision. In the first instance, scholarship has not yet reached agreement (if ever it does) as to which criteria we should use in determining the historicity or otherwise of texts. For example, we have only to compare Meier's list of criteria (1991-4, 1:168-84) with that of Meyer (1979, 81-7, 259 n.35) to appreciate differences in approach. Yet, such differences in selection of criteria would not necessarily justify an opting out from an attempt at determining attribution of texts. In the second instance, however, the thesis covers several key texts and time constraints preclude giving each of these texts the detailed research needed to determine whether they go back to Jesus himself or not. Therefore we will be looking at how Jesus is portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels, rather than arguing for historicity. Our focus is on the way that Jesus was understood and interpreted by those who handed on his teaching and the memory of his actions.

When we examine each key text in the thesis, we will make no attempt to argue that each of the evangelists had a distinctively different approach to the way in which each portrayed Jesus in relation to the 'Natural World'. In the course of the investigations for this work, we have found nothing that suggested any major differences between the gospels in this respect. Instead, where there are parallel

versions of a verse or pericope, we will note any differences that are relevant to the argument. The question of authorship of each Gospel is not investigated here, since it has already been extensively discussed in major commentaries such as those by Guelich (1989, xxv-xxix), Davies and Allison (1988-97, 1: 7-58) and Fitzmyer (1981-85, 1: 35-59) for Mark, Matthew and Luke respectively.

Although it is not possible to say with certainty that sayings attributed to Jesus in the Synoptic tradition are the *ipssissima verba*, it may be possible to show the *ipssissima vox* (Meier 1991-4, 1:174) as understood by the evangelists. It is surely significant that his followers saw Jesus as referring constantly to the living natural world in a way that suggests that he was sympathetic to it. In essence, we will be looking at what might be expected of a first century Palestinian Jew. The evangelists were aware that Jesus was heir to a tradition of Hebrew scripture, of Torah, Wisdom literature, Prophetic writings, and of the oral traditions which were later to be collated as the Mishnah and later still expanded into the Talmud(s) and the Tosephta. Thus the portrayal of Jesus as seeing the beauty and diversity of creation was in line with the traditions of Prophetic teaching and Wisdom literature.

(d) Sources

(I) Material from Hebrew Scripture

It must be remembered that the Hebrew Scriptures were written over several centuries by various people, who did not necessarily share the same perspective. For example, the writers of the Prophetic books may have had different aims from the writers of Torah. While the Torah was written to establish a code of practice, the

Prophetic writings acted as challenge to the way in which that practice was implemented. The issue of sacrifice is one example of this.

Sacrifice.

Whole books have been written on the issue of sacrifice with regard to: its origins and the Hebrew Bible (De Vaux 1964; Milgrom 1983); its entire history in Judaism and Christianity (Daly 1978) and its place in the New Testament (Young 1975; Chilton 1993). Therefore, it did not seem necessary to retrace the footsteps of others along this route. While sacrifice is an issue related to the argument of the thesis, it is not an issue *integral* to the argument, which is dealing with attitudes to living animals. Moreover, even before the destruction of the Temple made sacrifice impossible, the early Christians may have ceased to participate in the sacrificial system (Dunn 1991, 70, 77-79; cf. Bauckham 1993, 150 n.37).

However, the issue of sacrifice is one that we could not ignore and we review it in excursus one. Since there is a tension between care for the animal and its sacrifice, we will be looking at this as expressed in the image of the *kriophoros* and the 'good shepherd'. We also discuss the ritual method of slaughter (*shechitah*) and whether it was intended to be humane or if a humanitarian ethic was evolved from the method. The sacrifice of domestic animals was part of Judaism and therefore something with which Jesus as a Jew in the first half of the first century CE would have been familiar. We will argue that texts in which Matthew portrays Jesus as quoting Hosea 6:6 show that Matthew perceived Jesus as being at least in line with the prophetic denunciation of sacrifice without love shown to neighbour. We will also be looking

at the possibility that Matthew envisaged Jesus as condemning the practice of sacrifice *per se.*

The Influence of Torah

In order to understand how Torah would have affected attitudes to animals, we look at a representative text: 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain' (Deut 25:4). Since the thesis argument is concerned with the New Testament and not Hebrew Scripture *per se*, the section is placed in an excursus and not in a separate chapter. We review a range of possible 'original' interpretations. Was the interdict to be interpreted literally or symbolically? Whatever the original intention of the Deuteronomic priests, it is without doubt that Philo (*De Virt.* 27.145) and Josephus (*Ant.* 4.8.21 §23) took the text as a literal injunction which was for humane treatment of the animals. Paul's interpretation (1 Cor 9:9b-10a) is also discussed, as are the references to the text in the Temple Scroll 11QT 52:13. (We will be returning to Paul later). We also look at actual practices in antiquity from pictorial and literary evidence as well as pertinent rabbinic texts such as *Sifre Deut.* 287 and *t.B.Meṣ.* 8.4-7. There are other Deuteronomic texts pertaining to animals which we might also have considered, such as 'You shall not plough with an ox and an ass together' (Deut 22:10). However, Deuteronomy 25:4 was selected not only because of its wide range of interpretations, but also because it is mentioned by Paul in one of his own rare references to the Natural World (1 Cor 9:9b-10a).

(II) Material from Qumran and Rabbinic material, New Testament and Patristic Literature.

References to rabbinic material are made, where pertinent, with the caveat that they were *written* later. Although it is likely that the second century Mishnaic tractates did show some of the beliefs and practices of New Testament times, there is always the possibility that they conveyed rabbinic argument as to the ideal rather than what was actually practised. This was all the more true of the fourth century Talmuds. Nevertheless, the rabbinic writings codified the oral halakah, which presumably did bear some resemblance to actual practices. With regard to the writings of Qumran, it must also be remembered that these writings (like those of Hebrew scripture) were written by various people over a period of time and who did not necessarily share the same viewpoint. We draw attention to any differences in approach in tractates that are relevant to the thesis. Again, the praxis of Qumran may well have been quite different from that of mainstream Judaism.

While the thesis looks in depth at particular parts of the Synoptic Gospels, there are, of course, references to parallel passages in John, and to other parts of the New Testament. Since there are few references to the Natural World in the rest of the New Testament there are not many passages outside the Synoptic Gospels that are directly relevant to the thesis. Thus, there is little use made of the Pauline corpus for example. Animals and plants mentioned in Revelation are strictly imaginary (4:6-8; 9:7-10; 13:1-3; 22:2). Some use has also been made of Patristic writings where these comment on relevant passages in the Synoptic gospels.

(III) Graeco-Roman Attitudes

Since the lands of Galilee (from 44CE) and Judaea (from 6CE) were under Roman occupation in New Testament times and had been subject to Hellenistic influence since the Macedonian conquest, it is appropriate to consider Graeco-Roman attitudes where relevant. For instance, with regard to domestic stock, references are made to the Roman agricultural treatises of Cato, Varro and Columella. Frequently, New Testament writers have also made use of such material (Fitzmyer 1981-5, 1:704; Gundry 1993, 262: Davies and Allison 1988-97, 2:382). Time and space prohibit an extended comparison between Jewish and Hellenistic attitudes, but where pertinent, references to such material are made. From time to time, in order to illuminate a particular point, the reader's attention is drawn to illustrative material from sculpture and paintings.

(e) Miscellaneous Points

At times also, we consider textual variants where these could alter the interpretation of the text. For example, in the episode of the animal in the pit on the Sabbath (Luke 14:5), there are several variants, identifying the casualty as an ox, a sheep or even a child: these are discussed in the relevant chapter. Lastly, we will include a third (and final) excursus on the coinage of the period since it gives not merely background information to the story of the sparrows (Luke 12:6; Matt 10:29) but also the economic perspective of the saying. We will make no attempt to equate the value of the coins with those of today. Money is worth only what it buys, and the economic structure and lifestyles of the first century Jewish people were vastly different from those of present day Western society. Again, we will place the material in an

excursus since it is not *integral* to the main theme, but is merely related to one aspect of the theme. The main point in the text of the argument is the concern shown for the sparrows: their low cost emphasises that point.

Thus we will be making use of a range of materials and several complementary approaches in the argument. We will discuss the last of these, namely, 'the reasons for using biological and botanical data' in the following section.

Argument for the Inclusion of Biological and Botanical Data in a Theological Thesis.

Although the naming of animals and plants was not done on a scientific basis, since there was no Linnaean system of classification in first century Israel/Palestine, even in antiquity, it was recognised that there were different plant and animal groups. In Hebrew, and later in Aramaic, most attention was given to the naming of domestic animals where both male and female of the species received a separate name (even if the one was derived from the other, for example, *kebeś* 'a young ram' or 'male lamb' and *kibsah* 'a young ewe' or 'female lamb'). The wild creatures however were less easy to identify, and in some of the texts in Hebrew Scripture, we can arrive at a possible conclusion only as to the species involved. Hebrew/Aramaic nomenclature is mentioned here partly because Jesus was most likely to have spoken in Aramaic and partly because names of species used in the Greek New Testament are also to be found in the LXX where they have been translated from the Hebrew. (There are of course differences in semantic ranges, for example πῶλος may mean a 'colt' of either an ass or of a horse, or a 'horse' per se. When necessary such differences are discussed more fully.)

However, conceding that there are difficulties in identification does not mean that there should be no attempt made to arrive at a likely conclusion as to the species of animal or plant involved. Lack of knowledge in the seventeenth century may have been the reason for the AV translator of Matthew 13:25-40 to render ζιζάνια as 'tares'. The tare or vetch is a European plant *Vicia sp.*, which does not grow in

Israel/Palestine: now the usual translation is darnel (*Lolium temulentum*) which closely resembles wheat and is a persistent pest in cornfields (Hepper 1992, 88, 94n.9). Nowadays, with the knowledge we have of biblical plant and animal life, there is no excuse for attributing European species to the A.N.E.

If scholarship is to entail the use of archaeological or numismatic evidence with reference to the topic, then accuracy as far as possible should be expected in the dating of such evidence, plus information on the location of the artifacts or coins. Other supporting evidence such as epigraphic material should also be taken into consideration and the same standards of accuracy expected. Therefore, in writing about the natural world in the Synoptic Gospels, surely the same standards of accuracy should apply? Since common names for plants and animals may vary from region to region let alone from country to country, it is better to give the internationally recognised name for each species. For the sake of consistency, every plant or animal mentioned in the thesis is given its scientific name, even if there seems little likelihood of confusion.

As well as accuracy (as far as possible) in nomenclature, it is surely also desirable to have relevant information about the plants and animals mentioned - their importance to the Jewish people and also to the Graeco-Roman world as a contemporary comparison. Here use has been made of Roman writers such as Varro and Columella, who have written extensively on the care of domestic animals. In writing about the wild animals and plants use has been made of twentieth century writers such as Hepper (1992), Cansdale (1970) and Bodenheimer (1935). However,

no work on biblical natural history would be complete without reference to the fine works of Canon H.B. Tristram whose *'Flora and Fauna of Palestine'* enumerates every species found in his visits to Palestine, and whose *'Natural History of the Bible'* gives many valuable insights into the behaviour of the animals observed at first hand. These two books are a priceless record of the natural history of an area which has seen more changes in the century between our time and that of Tristram, than in all the preceding nineteen centuries put together. While indigenous species of animals and plants have been lost in this century, exotic plants have been introduced, mainly as cash crops. Lake Huleh to the north of the Sea of Galilee was once a paradise for birds, it has now been largely drained for agriculture. This is neither the time nor place to comment on the ecology of present-day Israel, but the changes in the twentieth century environment have been so extensive that the records contained in the nineteenth century works of Tristram are all the more valuable.

Knowledge of the characteristics of an animal species plus an appreciation of its importance to the life of Jewish people makes it easier to have an understanding of the role of the same species in a theological sense. For example, the sheep was an essential provider of milk and wool for food and clothing and was therefore one of the most important animals in Jewish life. However, the sheep's characteristic propensity for straying, plus its defencelessness, made it a useful symbol of the errant human being in need of care. Again, for the sake of consistency, background information is given for all the species mentioned, even if they play a more peripheral role in Jewish life.

Finally, the giving of biological and botanical data in a theological thesis does not mean that boundaries have been crossed and areas entered which were previously unknown to New Testament scholars. Writers such as Fitzmyer (1981-5, 2: 979) and Jeremias (1972, 224) make use of such information, even if it is relegated to footnotes. The difference is that, here, such information has been used more extensively and in the main body of the text as befits the subject. 'Our treatment of this science will be adequate if it achieves that amount of precision which belongs to its subject matter.' (Aristotle *Ethica Nicomachea* 1094b 12-13).

Prologue

The Land

Even the stork in the heavens knows her times; and the turtledove, swallow and crane keep the time of their coming (Jer 8:7)[1].

Long before this ancient observation, migratory birds passed over the lands of Israel in their flight north in spring and south in autumn, as they do to this day. If we could see the land from a stork's eye view as it passed north in spring, we would see first, the high deserts of the Negev, then the deep rift valley from the salt lands of the Aravah, over the Dead Sea, up the River Jordan and over the Sea of Galilee to Lake Huleh[2]. As we passed we would see on our left the mountains and uplands of Judaea, Samaria and Galilee and, on the far side of these, the coastal plain bordering the Mediterranean. On our right would be the desert, steppes and hills of Transjordan. Thus we would have a bird's eye view of a small country, full of contrasts, standing at the crossroads of zoogeographical regions and combining elements of the animal and plant life of the Mediterranean, Euro-Siberian, Irano-Turanian, Saharo-Sindian and Sudano-Deccanian areas (Bodenheimer 1935, 19).

Climate and Soils

Long dry summers and winter rainfall are typical of the climate in general. Of the three climactic areas, the Mediterranean has the highest rainfall and the lowest temperature fluctuation; the Saharo-Sindian has the least precipitation, although the temperature ranges are similar to those of the Mediterranean area; finally, the Irano-

Turanian region has the highest temperature range but the precipitation is intermediate (Bodenheimer, 44). There would appear to have been no major changes in climate from biblical times to today (Hopkins 1987, 180).

The coastal plain consists of a range of soils: two parallel bands of kurkar (which is a mixture of limestone and sand containing gravel) fertile alluvial soils such as loam, and sand dunes by the sea shore (Bodenheimer 1935, 57). The mountain uplands are also varied in soil formation. Terra rossa, which constitutes about forty per cent of the land west of the Jordan, is found mainly in the uplands of Judaea, Samaria and Galilee and also in considerable areas of level plateau north and south of Jerusalem. Although it is a fertile soil it is difficult to work because of the steep slopes: terracing is the usual answer to the difficulty. In south-west Galilee, south Carmel and central Samaria the grey rendzina soil predominates. Less fertile than the terra rossa, rendzina is easier to work. Steppe soil occurs in the western Judaean desert and the northern Negev and is uncultivable. Loess soil, which is also found in the northern Negev and in the southern Transjordan, is the most valuable soil of the desert and, in some areas, it has been cultivated for millenia (M. Zohary 1982, 22).

Vegetation

The phytogeography of the land is based on the same regions and elements as its zoogeography. The original climax forest[3] that covered much of the land was dominated by the evergreen Kermes oak (*Quercus calliprinos*). According to Hepper (1992, 34) it originally ranged from Carmel down to Hebron, and even today there are still such forests on the hills of upper Galilee and Gilead, while in Judaea it

occurs as individual trees such as 'Abraham's oak' at Mamre. Formerly it also covered areas of the Sharon Plain until it was gradually replaced in the early Arab period (c 700 CE) by Mt Tabor oak (*Quercus ithaburensis*) which is deciduous. This famous forest in turn has been reduced to single stands of scattered trees among the now prevalent carob (*Ceratonia siliqua*) and lentisk (*Pistacia lentisk*) which replaced it (Liphschitz et al. 1987, 43).

The Mt Tabor oak mentioned above (which can grow to a height of thirty-one feet) represents another kind of forest. Often accompanied by the terebinth (*Pistacia atlantica*) it is now limited to the Sharon, lower Galilee and the Huleh and Dan valleys.

The third forest type is that of the Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*): remnants are still to be found in Galilee, Samaria and Judaea as well as Gilead and Mt Carmel. The Aleppo pine itself was never a common tree due to its need of moist soil in summer (Hepper 1992, 31). None of these form the dense forests of more northerly climes.

Scrub forest of smaller trees, in the intermediate type of vegetation (maquis), consist principally of carob (*Ceratonia siliqua*) and mastic pistacia or lentisk (*Pistacia lentiscus*). These grow in the foothills of the west of the mountain range from Judaea to Lebanon as well as on the eastern slopes of the mountains of Galilee and Samaria. In some areas this may well have been the original climax forest.

All of the forms of forest described above belong to Mediterranean types of vegetation. The river forests of the Jordan valley, dominated by the Euphrates poplar (*Populus euphraticus*) and the tamarisk (*Tamarix spp.*), belong to tropical or Sudanian vegetation.

The next stage down in the vegetation cycle is that of garigue (*bathah*) which covers deforested or abandoned land. As well as plant communities containing the thorny burnet (*sarcopoterium spinosum*) there are those which consist of annual plants and grasses. In regeneration of formerly forested areas this is the first stage vegetation.

Deforestation

As Currid indicates, the causes of deforestation began with the clearance of woodland in the alluvial valleys and plains for cultivation by ancient man (1984, 6-7). Later, under population pressure, man began to clear the hills of original vegetation and terrace them for agriculture. However, referring to the forests of the Shephelah, Currid gives several other factors in the destruction of the woodlands (1984, 6). Warfare is one example of exploitation: in the sixth century BCE, Nebuchadrezzer's siege of Lachish involved cutting down the trees and using them to set fire to the city. Other human factors were the use of trees for timber, charcoal burning, and for the abstraction of tannin for tanning and dyeing. Lastly, pastoral overgrazing by transhumant flocks of sheep and goats also denuded the land of trees. The black goat, in particular was a voracious feeder (Applebaum 1976, 655) and as goats browse rather than merely graze, young seedlings did not have the chance to become established.

Forest was not the only plant cover, however, as there were other distinctive vegetal types in particular areas such as the sand dunes of the coastal belt. These dunes are dominated by plants, such as marram grass (*Ammophila arenaria*), which help to stabilise the dunes. Where soil is consolidated, carob scrub can become established.

The poorest vegetation layer is found in the Negev that consists of a combination of steppe and desert vegetation: the former, mainly in the north, has low shrubs such as wormwood (*Artemesia herbalba*) and annuals. In the gravel deserts the sparser vegetation is mainly in the dry river beds where tamarisk (*Tamarisk spp*) and white broom (*Artemesia alba*) are prevalent: elsewhere, the gravel deserts are without plants. In the sand deserts vegetation is mainly of grasses such as the triple-awned grass (*Stipagrostis scoparia*) and the turgid panic grass (*Panicum turgidum*). In the Aravah dunes there are bushes and small trees such as white saxaul (*Haloxylon persicum*) and white hammada (*Hammada salicornica*). The various types of terrain obviously influenced the methods of cultivation used, which were diverse.

Alluvial Land

The first areas cultivated were the alluvial plains and valleys. In the few cases where the variation in soil colour indicates field patterns, these are generally symmetrical and 'reminiscent of the lands which were parcelled into *centuriae quadratae* by the Roman *agrimensores*' (Golomb and Kedar 1971, 139). Applebaum (1989a, 85) describes how centuriation[4] has been applied in Hellenistic times to the area round Ptolemais-'Ake which, a consensus has agreed, provided lands for the veterans of *X Fretensis, VI Ferrata* and the *XII Fulminata.* Other areas that were centuriated were:

the eastern plain of Esdralon (again in connection with the VI Ferrata), the area around Tel Lachish in north west Judaea, south west Samaria and Bashan (Applebaum 1989b 163).

Strip Lynchets

Unlike terraces that follow the contours of the land on a horizontal plane, strip lynchets rise and fall gently along the slopes and taper off near the top. Where outcrops of hard limestone occur in isolated parts, they can give a similar appearance to terraces. Although the origin of this method of agriculture is not known, it was used from ancient times in Galilee and Samaria: indeed Arab farmers in these areas still use it today (Golomb and Kedar 1971, 137). Like terracing, this type of cultivation was common in hilly areas throughout the Roman Empire. Strip lynchets are mentioned in the Mishnah *Pe'a* 3.1: '...if the ends of the rows [of corn] were confused (i.e. they tapered into one another at the top) *Pe'a* (gleanings) is granted from one [plot] for all.'

Enclosures

Fields enclosed by stones were found on level or gently sloping land. The stonework was of two types: *gadar* the major fencing and *ḥayiṣ* the secondary partition. The *ḥayiṣ* prevented soil erosion and retained the even level of the land as well as acting as partition. Golomb and Kedar suggest that asymmetrical partitioning may have been due to the growing of different crops or to the result of inherited land rights: while symmetrical partitions may have been due to centuriation by the Roman *agrimensores* (1971, 138). Although the average acreage of an enclosed field was

four acres, plots varied from one acre or less to fifteen acres. Most families owned several plots because of specific needs such as orchards and vegetables and also because the plots themselves had probably previously been divided (Broshi 1992, 240). Where the land was abandoned and the walls crumbled, soil erosion took place.

Dams

There is a similarity between the dams in Galilee and those of the Negev: curiously other forms of cultivation found in Galilee are not found in the Negev. Basically, the dams served to retain the eroded soil, which settled on the bed of the stream and formed narrow strips of land. The retained water served for irrigation. D.Zohary describes how a series of dams across each tributary valley created a series of level plots, with the stream bed itself being obliterated: the run-off water on both sides served to irrigate each level (1954, 21-22). In the main valleys of the central Negev, terracing was used on the hills and the wadi was allowed to run its course.

Terraces

This was probably the most important because the most widespread form of cultivation. The building of terraces in the Judaean mountains required three components: constructions for collecting and storing the spring water; a system of conveyers and channels to irrigate the area; and levelled terraces (Ron 1966, 112). Original vegetation around the spring outlet was removed and the water collected in a pool, with either a tunnel or canal formed of hewn stone to act as a conduit from outlet to pool. The age of these complex structures is difficult to determine but Ron assumes a period of not later than the end of the Second Temple Era (1966, 113). At

the pool of Siloam, Jerusalem, there are a number of storage and irrigation systems that were used to irrigate terraces in the Kidron Valley. Though some of these stuctures belong to the Second Temple period, some date back to Jebusite times. Terracing as a means of cultivation goes back to the twelfth century BCE but did not become widespread until the eighth century BCE because of the amount of labour and people required (Hopkins (1987, 178).

Crops

'A land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey' (Deut. 8:8) This verse lists the 'seven species', or basic crops which are considered in detail below along with other crops which were grown in Israel.

Wheat (*Triticum spp.*)

The two species of wheat grown were, and still are, durum wheat (*T. durum*) and emmer (*T. diccocum*) both derived from wild wheat (*T. diccoides*). It was a crop grown by 'dry-farming' i.e. the fields were not irrigated and were dependent on the uncertain rains (M. Zohary 1982,74). Wheat is still grown in the coastal valleys, the valley of Jezreel, the upper Jordan valley and the Beth-Shean valley. According to D. Zohary (1954, 22) the tributary valleys of the central Negev are also capable of growing wheat and barley. It was used for both bread (Exod 29:2) and the showbread (Exod 25:30): and the grains were eaten parched (Ruth 2:14) and raw (Mark 2:23). Jesus used wheat in his parables (Matt 13:25-29): but in John 12:24, he himself is the wheat.

Barley (*Hordeum vulgare*)

Like wheat, barley originated as a wild grass growing in the oak woodlands of the Fertile Crescent (Hepper 1992, 86). As it tolerated a drier atmosphere than wheat it could be grown in places like the semi-arid regions of the north Negev (M.Zohary 1982, 76) and the central Negev also (D. Zohary 1954, 22). The grains could be eaten parched (2 Sam 17:28) as well as forming flour for barley bread: the latter was the bread of poor people (John 6:8-9)[5]. According to Borowski (1987, 92) it was used for brewing *šēkār* the strong drink of Isaiah 29:9.

Vine (*Vitis vinifera*)

Although viticulture was established in the land in Canaanite times, the wild vine (*Vitis sylvestris*) is not native to Israel, but occurs from southern Europe to the Caspians and Himalayas. As well as wine, the cultivated vine also provided grapes and raisins. Raisins were found in bronze-age Jericho by Kenyon (1952,74). Hepper states that grape seeds have been found in virtually all the archaeological sites of the land, thus testifying to the ubiquity of the vine (1992, 100). Wine was used as an antiseptic along with oil, at least in New Testament times (Luke 10:34). Watchtowers, such as the one mentioned in Isaiah 5:1-8, are to be found to this day in Samaria (Applebaum et al. 1978, 91) and Judaea (Hepper 1992, 96). In the Hebrew Scriptures the vine was a symbol of peace and prosperity (Mic 4:4) and in the New Testament a metaphor of Jesus himself (John 15:1).

Fig (*Ficus carica*)

The wild progenitor of the fig may have been the species still to be found at the Caspian foreshore and north west Turkey (M.Zohary 1982, 59). Dried figs dating from around 5000 BCE were found at Gezer. It was an important food source particularly during times of war or famine as the fruit could be eaten dried as well as fresh. The fruits could be dried singly, on strings, or pressed into cakes. It was grown throughout Judaea, Samaria and Galilee. An inferior type of fig was produced by the sycomore tree (*Ficus sycomorus*) which is mentioned in Amos 7:14. Like the vine, the fig was a symbol of prosperity in the Old Testament (1 Kgs 4.25). In the New Testament the barren fig tree was used as a symbol of those lacking the fruit of righteousness (Mark 11:12-14, 20-21).

Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*)

This fruit tree may have originated by the shores of the Caspian (Hepper 1992, 116). It was certainly found along with raisins in the excavation of Jericho at the Bronze Age level, around 1600 BCE (Kenyon 1952, 74). It was grown in Judaea, Samaria and Galilee. While the seeds were eaten fresh or dried or even pressed into a drink, the rind was used for tanning (M.Zohary 1982, 62). The distinctive shape of the fruit formed the decoration round the hem of the priest's blue robe (Exod 28:33-4) while, traditionally, the calyx inspired the shape of Solomon's crown. There is no mention of the pomegranate in the New Testament.

Olive (*Olea europea*)

The olive is generally thought to have derived from *Olea europaea var. sylvestris*. M.Zohary believes it was first cultivated in Israel (1982, 57). Seeds of the cultivated olive have been found at Teleilat Ghassal (north of the Dead Sea) which dates from 3700-3500 BCE. The trees were grown in Galilee, Samaria and the Shephalah but parts of Judaea were too high for successful cultivation. The oil was certainly used for cooking (1 Kgs 17:14) and according to Hepper 'olive oil was mixed with meal for cakes, for frying meat and for eating with bread and stews' (1992, 108). It was also used for lighting (Exod 27:20) and anointing (1 Kgs 1:34). As there is no mention of the olive as a table fruit in the Old Testament, and as the fruit of the untreated olive is bitter, Borowski (123) holds that the olive was not used as a table fruit until the introduction of pickling and salting in the Hellenistic Roman period (1987, 123). The lack of its mention as a table fruit, however, does not necessarily mean that salted olives at least were not eaten earlier than Hellenistic times. Salt was known as a seasoning long before that era (Lev 2:13). Moreover, there are instances of other foodstuffs - peas (*Pisum sativum*) for example - which are not mentioned in the Old Testament, yet have been found on archaeological sites at Jericho and Arad as Borowski describes (1987, 96-97). The first reference to the olive is in Genesis 8:11 with the dove returning with the branch in its bill. In the New Testament, Paul uses the olive in his extended metaphor in Romans 11:17-24 of grafting the wild branch on to the cultivated rootstock 'against nature'.

Date (*Phoenix dactylifera*)

The wild progenitors grew beside springs and oases along the Saharan region from the Atlantic coast to the Persian Gulf (M. Zohary 1982, 60). Later, the cultivated palm was grown in the Jordan and Aravah valleys. A careful reader will have noted that the last crop mentioned in the 'seven species' list was 'honey' and not 'date'. However, as Borowski (1987, 127) points out, the same word *dēbāš* applies to honey made from dates as well as to honey made by bees (BDB, 185). As well as fresh fruit and honey, the tree gave timber for fences, roofs and rafts, while the leaves were woven into mats and baskets (M. Zohary 1982, 60). In Deuteronomy 34:3, Jericho is called the city of palm trees while Josephus refers to it as 'the most fertile spot in Judaea, rich in palms and in balsalm' *(J.W.* 1.6.6 §138). In the New Testament, palm branches (which are actually the leaves) were strewn before Jesus on his way into Jerusalem (John 12:13).

Although important, the 'seven species' were by no means the only crops grown; others cultivated from ancient times included:

- Almond (*Prunus amygdalus*) which was used for nuts and later for its wood (Borowski 1987, 132). The flowers served as a model for the decoration of the Tabernacle and the Menorah (Exod 25:33-36; 37:19-20).
- The broad bean (*Vicia faba*) was cultivated throughout Mediterranean lands by the Bronze Age and was one of the foods given to David (2 Sam 17:27).
- The lentil (*Lens culinaris*) is probably the oldest of the cultivated pulses as carbonised remains of lentils were found at Jarmo in Kurdistan and date back to 6000

BCE: those found at Beth Shean are datable to 3000-2500 BCE (Hepper 1992, 128). They formed Esau's 'mess of pottage' (Gen 25:29-34).

- The chick pea (*Cicer arietinum*) has been found in the Early Bronze Age deposits of Jericho. M.Zohary (1982, 83) suggests that the chick pea is the *hāmîs* of Isaiah 30:34, which would provide food for oxen and asses.

- The common pea (*Pisum sativum*) has been grown in the area for millenia as it has been found in Early Neolithic villages dating from 7000-6000 BCE. However, there is no identifiable mention of it in the bible. None of these last few crops are mentioned in the New Testament.

We have given a brief survey of the land, its terrain and vegetation together with the most important crops, which were grown by the Jewish people, to give a framework for the thesis. In the next chapter we will be looking at the wild animals which inhabited the land.

Endnotes: Prologue

[1]Driver (1955, 131) maintains the translation should be 'swift' on onomatopoetic grounds 'the Hebrew *sîs* ...reproduce the harsh 'sree' or 'si-si-si' which that bird utters. He also cites Bodenheimer's *Tierwelt Palästinas* in maintaining that the swift is a migrant in Palestine, while the swallow is resident. However, Bodenheimer (1935, 164) states that the common swallow of Palestine (*Hirundo transitiva*) leaves for East Africa in the winter.

[2]The former swampy lake has been considerably reduced in size by draining for agriculture, but a remnant has been kept as the Huleh Nature Reserve.

[3]Authors vary in the terms they use to describe vegetal types and even in the division of types: Hepper, for example, differentiates between garigue and bathah. For clarity the system used by M. Zohary (1982) is used here.

[4]Centuriation was a grid system of apportioning land colonised by the Romans. 'It affected chiefly *ager publicus* and therefore most of the territory of the *coloniae*' (Frayn 1979, 97)

[5]For a full description of bread and other items in the diet, according to social status, see Hamel (1990, 30-56, particularly 32-33.)

1. 'With the Wild Animals'

After his baptism in the Jordan, Jesus is driven by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where he is 'with the wild animals' (Mark 1:13b)[1]. This terse statement is the starting point for our survey of the way in which Jesus is portrayed in relation to wild animals. Some have suggested that the wild animals of Mark 1:13b were to be regarded as hostile (Best 1983, 57; 1965, 8-9). Some have argued that the animals had a more neutral role and served only to emphasise the loneliness of the wilderness (Foerster 1965, 134). Others have seen this text as having a paradisal motif with Jesus as the second Adam living in peace with the wild animals (Pesch 1976-7, 1:95; Gnilka 1978-9, 1:58). This last interpretation has been extended to include Messianic peace with the wild animals (Guelich 1989, 39-40; Bauckham 1994, 19). Some have found grounds for an Exodus typology here and have drawn parallels with the testing of the Israelites (Gibson 1995, 63) or with the testing of Moses as the leader of the people (Henten 1999, 358-366). Which, if any of these interpretations is correct? How did Mark view Jesus' relationship with the wild creatures? Did Mark envisage Jesus as regarding them as creatures to be avoided if not actually feared? Or did he perceive Jesus as accepting the companionship of the wild animals as part of the created world where each thing that breathes gives praise to God (Ps 150:6)? In seeking answers to these questions, we will be looking at Jewish attitudes to wild animals and also some Graeco-Roman views.

The Animals of the Wilderness

First, it may be useful to look at some of the animals which Jesus may have encountered in the wilderness, that is the wilderness of Judaea and the lower Jordan valley (Funk 1959, 208, 214)[2]. The carnivorous mammals included the lion (*Panthera leo*), the bear (*Ursus syriacus*), the leopard (*Panthera pardus*), the wolf (*Canis lupus*) and the jackal (*Canis aureus*). Since these carnivores preyed on flocks and herds, they are all discussed more fully in chapter five, which deals with sheep and goats. The larger herbivores of the desert areas included the dorcas gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*), the grey gazelle (*G. arabica*), the oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*), the Nubian ibex (*Capra nubiana*), and the onager or wild ass (*Equus onager*). Of the mammals, the rodents were probably the most numerous and included several species of mice (*Acomys spp.*), rats (*Rattus spp.),* gerbils (*Gerbillus spp.),* jirds (*Meriones spp.*), jerboas (*Jaculus* spp.) and voles (*Microtus spp.)*: because of the heat, the rodents are active mainly at night, where they are numbered in thousands (Bodenheimer 1935, 104-5). In desert areas, there would be several species of raptorial birds that are discussed in the next chapter, and migratory birds such as quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) and wheatears (*Oenanthe spp.*). Nevertheless, there were some species such as the sandgrouse (*Pterocles spp.*), the desert lark (*Ammomanes desertii*) and the Syrian ostrich (*Struthio syriacus*) which were resident throughout the year. Reptiles included snakes (which are discussed in conjunction with predators, in chapter five on sheep and goats), and lizards such as the desert lizards (*Acanthodactylus spp.),* the chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleo*), and the desert monitor (*Varanus griseus*). Invertebrates such as scorpions (*Buthus spp.)* formed a large part of the desert fauna (Cansdale 1970, 225-6).

People and Animals in the Ancient World:

Hunting

One way in which people in the ancient world came into contact with wild animals was through hunting. In this respect, there was a marked difference between the Jewish and the Graeco-Roman worlds in their respective attitudes towards wild creatures. In both cultures, people hunted for food or to be rid of a predator. However, the Greeks and Romans generally regarded hunting as a sport (Xenophon *Cynegeticus* 12.1-8; Polybius 31.29.1-12). Yet, even in the Graeco-Roman world, there were voices of dissent as to the value of hunting as a pastime (Varro *Saturae Menippae* 161, 293-96, 361; Sallust *Catilina* 4.1). The Jews, on the other hand, tended to hunt for food (Amos 3:5) or to remove a predator only (1 Sam 17:34-5). Although Esau (Gen 27:3, 30) and Nimrod (Gen 10:9) are mentioned as hunters, they are not regarded as the most admirable of the biblical characters. None of the patriarchs or the Israelite kings are portrayed as taking part in hunting. Later, Herod the Great is described by Josephus as hunting boars, stags and wild asses from horseback (*J.W.* 1.21.13 §429). However, Herod the Great (whose father was descended from an Idumaean family and whose mother was Arab or Nabataean) was never considered to be fully Jewish (Grant 1971, 20-24). Hunting for sport in any case tended to be a pursuit of the wealthy, who had the leisure for it (Anderson 1985, 83).

That the Jews hunted for game animals for food is evident from the list of permitted clean animals in Deuteronomy 14:5, where the seven species mentioned were not under the control of man (*Pesiq. Rab.* 16.1). These animals were probably the

following: fallow deer (*Dama dama*), dorcas gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*), bubale hartebeest (*Alcelaphus buselaphus*), ibex (*Capra nubiana*), addax (*Addax nasomaculatus*), oryx (*Oryx leucoryx*) and mountain sheep (*Ovis musimon*), (Cansdale 1970, 82, 84-94; cf. Hope 1991, 128-132). Elsewhere in Hebrew Scripture it is evident that game animals and birds were hunted by trap, snare and net (Prov 6:5, 7:22-23; Amos 3:5). These practices were continuing to take place centuries later *(m. Betz* 3.2; *m. Šabb.* 1.6).

Collections and Pets

In the Graeco-Roman world, there was an interest in keeping animals in collections such as those of Ptolemy II in Egypt in the third century BCE. This collection probably owed its origin to the use of wild animals in Greek processions in honour of Artemis or Dionysus (Jennison 1937, 2). A later development was the growth of private menageries, aviaries and fishponds kept in parks by wealthy Romans (Varro *De Re Rustica* 3.12-13; Suetonius *Nero* 31.1). The reasons for keeping such collections were varied: the motives included ostentation, pleasure and profit (Columella De Re Rustica 9.1). Thus collections of wild animals could be kept merely as status symbols or they could provide the owners with pleasure in seeing the animals. Such collections, however, could also be a means of supplying food for the table.

Greek and Roman people also kept individual pets such as dogs (Athenaeus 12.553; Martial 1.109), cats (*Anthologia Graeca* 204, 205, 206; Seneca *Epistulae* 121.19; Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 10.94.202) and birds (Aristotle *Historia Animalium*

8.12.597B; Catullus 2.1-4; 3.1-10). The Romans also kept monkeys (Plautus *Miles Gloriosus* 2.162, 179; Martial 14.202), reptiles (Seneca De Ira 2.31.6), deer (Virgil *Aeneid* 7.483-92), and gazelles (Martial 13.99).

Animals in the Roman Arena

Nevertheless, there was a darker side to the Roman interest in wild animals.

> [It was] one of the outstanding paradoxes of the Roman mind - that a people that was so much alive to the interest and beauty of the animal kingdom, that admired the intelligence and skill to be found in so many of its representatives, that never seemed to tire of the sight of rare and unfamiliar specimens, that displayed such devotion to its pets, should yet have taken pleasure in the often hideous sufferings and agonizing deaths of quantities of magnificent and noble creatures (Toynbee 1973, 21).

In the Roman world the slaughter of exotic animals in the arena took place wherever rulers had spectacles organised to 'amuse' the masses. Although it is uncertain when exotic animals first made an appearance at the games, Marcus Fulvius Nobilior staged hunts with 'African beasts' (i.e. lions and leopards) at Rome in 186 BCE (Livy 39.22.1-2). These games continued to be given at least until the time of Theodoric in the sixth century CE (Cassiodorus *Variarum* 5.42). In rare instances, however, even those who enjoyed such spectacles were appalled as happened at the brutal slaughter of the elephants at the games organised by Pompey in 55 BCE (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 8.7.21-22; Cicero *Epistulae ad Familiares* 7.1.3). Such spectacles took place in arenas throughout the Roman world, but were

condemned by rabbis such as the second century R. Meir (*t. 'Abod. Zar.* 2.5) and the third century R. Pazzi (*b. 'Abod. Zar.* 18b). Weiss shrewdly asks 'If the Jewish population had had no contact whatsoever with these places of entertainment, why would the rabbis have felt compelled to discuss a topic that would then have been irrelevant?' (1998, 244). However, we have no means of knowing the extent of any Jewish attendance at the games.

Wild Animals in the Jewish World

In the Jewish world, after the Exile of the sixth century BCE, there would have been little opportunity to accrue the wealth, which would have been needed to collect and transport wild animals for menageries. Centuries earlier Solomon, whose wealth was legendary (2 Chron 9:13), had huge quantities of animals including gazelles to provide food for his household (1Kgs 4:22-24). He also kept horses (and their chariots) as power symbols (1Kgs 4:26; cf. 2 Chron 9:25). Later the Seleucid kings, especially Antiochus IV, kept war elephants (Jennison 1937, 2). Strictly speaking, of course, both the horses of Solomon and the elephants of Antiochus were domestic rather than wild animals. The point is that although both Solomon and the Seleucids kept expensive animals for war purposes, none of them appear to have kept collections of animals simply for pleasure. Nevertheless, Solomon was reputed to have extensive knowledge 'of beasts and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish' (1Kgs 4:33).

There seem to be few recorded instances of Jewish people keeping pets. As we will see when we come to look at domestic animals, Nathan's parable of the ewe lamb (2

Sam 12:3) could have been taken from real life according to Tristram (1880, 143). One other indication that some pets may have been kept by Jewish people was the reference to playing with a bird kept on a leash (Job 41:5). It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that at least some Jewish people did become attached to one or two of the animals in their care, particularly young animals like the lamb of Nathan's parable. Again, animals as pets with no function other than companionship appear to be relatively unknown in the Jewish world. One possible reason for this would have been the cost of feeding animals that were neither working animals like the ox and ass, nor producers of wool and milk like the sheep and goat. Many, but not all, Jewish people were living at subsistence level in New Testament times (Hamel 1990, 94-141).

In Hebrew Scripture there are various kinds of references to wild animals. Some are literal references to predators like the lion or the bear (1 Sam 17:34) or to animals which were to be allowed as food, that is the seven permitted species which we looked at earlier in the list in Deuteronomy 14:5. Other texts, however, are symbolic and refer to attributes like the beauty and grace of the gazelle (Cant 2:8-9) or the industry of the ant (Prov 6:6). That the references in Proverbs to animals reveal 'an empirical knowledge' of the animals mentioned is demonstrated by Forti (1996, 53 n.13). However, some references are to animals such as the rock badger and the wild ass, as part of creation and therefore under God's care (Ps 104:10-13, 17-22, 27-30). There is a later resonance of this in the Synoptic references to providential care (Matt 6:26-30; Luke 12:24-28). Thus wild animals were not regarded simply as either predators (and therefore hostile) or as food items. Indeed in the Sabbatical year when

field, vineyard and olive grove were to lie fallow, the uncollected produce was to be left for the poor and 'what they leave the wild beasts may eat' (Exod 23:10).

The Various Possible Interpretations of Mark 1:13 as a Whole

So far we have been looking at the background to the text of Mark 1:13, now it is time to look at the text itself. If we look *briefly* at the various possible interpretations of Mark 1:13, we may perhaps establish which, if any, provides the most likely explanation 'of the short dark text' ('des kurzen dunklen Textes') as Pesch describes it (1976, 1:95). We will look first at the various interpretations of 1:13 as a whole, then examine 1:13b in more detail to try to ascertain what is meant by 'and he was with the wild animals'.

The Exodus Typology

Traditionally the wilderness was a place of theophanies for Hagar (Gen 16:7-13), Moses (Exod 3:1-6) and Elijah (1Kgs 19:4-18). However, Jesus has already encountered God (Mark 1:11), here in the wilderness it is temptation that he meets (1:13a). An Exodus typology has been suggested as an interpretation of the Markan text because of the 'forty days' which some take to be a shortening of the forty years sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness (Gibson 1995 63 n.79). This is the interpretation that is generally given to the parallel accounts in Matthew and Luke of the temptation story. We will not be discussing the parallel accounts here, since neither account refers to the wild animals. However, the Exodus interpretation of the Markan text presents problems because there is no mention of the Israelites' encountering wild beasts in the version of the story in Exodus. Only in Deuteronomy

8:15 and later in the 'Song of Moses' (32:34), where the leader addresses the people, is there a mention of wild animals during the wilderness sojourn. Moreover, there is no reference in either version of the Exodus story to the Israelites' being fed by angels.

In his comparison of Mark 1:13 with the Exodus story, Henten suggests that Jesus is being tested as the leader of the people (1999, 349, 358-63). However, as Henten concedes, the element of testing may also be found in the people's testing of the Lord (Exod 17:2; cf. Deut 33:8). Again this suggestion does not provide an exact parallel because, like the Israelites, Moses does not encounter wild beasts in the wilderness sojourn as it is described in Exodus, nor is he served by angels in either version.

The Elijah Typology

In some aspects, the closest typology is that of Elijah who was in the wilderness for forty days (1 Kgs 19:4), who encountered angels (1 Kgs 19:5-8) and earlier was fed by the ravens (1 Kgs 17:4) at the brook Kerith, traditionally associated with the Wady Kelt, a haunt of the raven and the eagle (Frazer 1918, 22-25). That the ravens do not merely 'feed' but 'sustain' Elijah is noted by Hauser (1990, 14, 85 n.9). Thus Elijah has a friendly encounter with wild creatures in the ravens, which were considered unclean (as food) by the Jews according to Leviticus 11:15. It must be noted that while Elijah is fed by the ravens, Jesus is not fed by the wild animals. Yet, in Elijah's encounter with the birds, we have a precedent for a positive relationship between humanity and wild creatures in a wilderness setting. This precedent appears to have been overlooked by the commentators, most of whom mention Elijah in this

context, only in connection with the forty day period in the wilderness. Although the feeding is by divine command, Elijah's relationship with the ravens is a positive one. Thus, if Elijah, as a prophet, can live apart from people for a time and in an amicable relationship with wild creatures, then surely a positive interpretation may also be given to Mark's view of the relationship of Jesus with the wild animals in Mark 1:13b.

The Second Adam Typology

A positive relationship with the wild animals in Mark 1:13 is found by Pesch who argues that the text is evidently viewing Christ as the second Adam because it shows Jesus as resisting temptation as Adam did not, and as restoring a paradisal state (so also Gnilka 1978-9, 1:58). While some commentators accepted this interpretation, as a possibility (Taylor 1952, 164; Hooker 1991, 50; Guelich 1989, 39; Nineham 1963, 64), others disagreed (Hurtado 1989, 21; Mann 1986, 202; Hare 1996, 19-20). Against this interpretation of Jesus as a second Adam is the setting of the desert rather than the garden. More importantly, Mark does not refer to Jesus as a second Adam elsewhere in the Gospel. Finally the angels do not serve Adam and Eve in the Genesis story (cf. *Adam and Eve* 4).

The Typology of Messianic Peace

Messianic peace with the wild animals is argued by Bauckham who suggests that there is a link with Isaiah 11:6-9 rather than with Genesis 2 and 3 (1994, 14-16). Others have also considered this possibility (Guelich 1989, 39; Grässer 1986, 145). Since this interpretation pertains to Mark 1:13b specifically, we will look at it in

detail later. At this point it may be as well to review the interpretations of 1:13 as a whole.

Summary of the Typologies

There is no exact parallel to any of the above typologies in Mark 1:13 as the following brief summary will show:

(A) The 'forty days' element is found in the account of Moses at Sinai (Exod 24:18; 34:28) and in that of Elijah in the wilderness (1 Kgs 19:8). This element is lacking in the story of the first Adam (Gen 2-3) and in the vision of Messianic peace with the wild animals (Isa 11:6-9). The wanderings of the Israelites took place over years not days (Exod 16:35; Deut 2:7).

(B) The 'temptation' as such is certainly found only in the story of Adam and Eve (Gen 3). Yet a period of 'testing' was given to the Israelites in the wilderness and also to Elijah (1 Kgs 19). This element is ambiguous in the story of Moses (Deut 33:8)[3]. It does not come into the concept of Messianic peace in Isaiah 11:6-9.

(C) The presence of 'wild animals' in a *companionable* sense is found in the account of the first Adam (Gen 3:20). Elijah is succoured by ravens who bring food to him in the morning and in the evening (1 Kgs 17:4, 6). The companionship of animals is also an important part of Isaiah's account of Messianic peace (11:6-9). The presence of wild animals in a *hostile* sense is not found in the Exodus version of the Israelites' wandering, but is mentioned in the Deuteronomic version (8:15-16) and the 'Song of Moses' (Deut 32:24).

(D) The 'ministration of angels' is not found in the Genesis account of Adam and Eve, yet there is a resonance of this in *Adam and Eve* 4. Neither Moses nor the

people of Israel are ministered to by angels. However, Elijah is fed by angels (1 Kgs 19:5-8). Again this element does not appear to come into the account of Messianic peace.

Thus it is doubtful that there is any *single* typology intended in the text of Mark 1:13. Yet, it is possible that in the Markan text, there is an echo of the story of Elijah who spent forty years in the wilderness (1 Kgs 19:4-8), who went through a testing period, but was tested by God, not Satan (1 Kgs 19:9-18), who met wild creatures in a positive relationship, but was fed by them in contrast to Jesus (1 Kgs 17:4, 6) and who was ministered to by angels (1 Kgs 19:5-7). Moreover, Mark does make further references to Elijah in connection with Jesus. In the Transfiguration scene Elijah is mentioned first, even before Moses (Mark 9:4). Jesus is also linked with Elijah in the minds of some of the people, who have not grasped that he is in fact 'the Christ' (Mark 8:28). Jesus, however, is depicted as seeing Elijah represented as 'coming first' in the person of John the Baptist (Mark 9:13). This may have arisen from the tradition that Elijah would appear before the Day of the Lord (Mal 4:5). Furthermore, in the Transfiguration scene, there is a resonance of Isaiah 42:1 in the expression 'this is my beloved Son' (Mark 9:7 cf. 1:11)[4]. Thus there are links between the Elijah story and the servant of God. Perhaps Mark did not intend one particular typology, but has instead given a composite picture derived from more than one source in Hebrew Scripture. We need look no further than the opening verses of his Gospel, 1:2b-3, where he combines Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 for an example of conflation. Therefore it is possible that there is also a conflation in Mark 1:13 of an allusion to Elijah (1 Kgs 17-19) and to Isaiah's vision of Messianic peace (Isaiah 11:6-9).

'With the Wild Animals': Hostility, Neutrality or Companionship?

Having looked at Mark 1:13 for its context, we can now look in detail at the text of 1:13b. What does the phrase 'with the wild animals' mean? The word μετά with the genitive means 'close and intimate communion' according to Mann, who draws attention to the usage in Mark 3:14, 5:18, 14:67 (1986, 203). This view was adopted earlier by Mahnke (1978, 20, 25). It is opposed by Gibson who argues that there is a sense of dominance rather than companionship when μετά is used with εἶναι (1995, 78-9, n.136). However, Gibson's argument does not take account of the fact that, in each case he cites, the association has an element of choice. Thus according to Mark 3:14, Jesus chose his disciples to be with him as companions not as servants, and the disciples chose to accompany him. The man who had been possessed of demons begged that he might be with him and Jesus chose not to have him (5:18). Peter had formerly been with Jesus (14:67) but had chosen to run away earlier (14:50) and when recognised, to deny the association (14:68). The phrase 'with the wild animals' therefore suggests voluntary association, not avoidance or hostility. The use of μετά with the imperfect ἦν indicates that the association is over a period of time (Grässer 1986, 149).

To support the argument that wild animals are normally viewed as hostile, many quote items from *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* namely: the righteous man will 'gain the mastery over every wild beast' (*T. Issach.* 7.7), and 'the wild animals will be afraid of you' i.e. of the righteous man (*T. Naph.* 8.4; *T. Benj.* 5.2). However, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, in the form in which they have come to us, were almost certainly edited by the same person, perhaps even written by

the same author (Sparks 1984, 505). If this is the case then we have a virtual repeat in three places of the same idea by the same person. Moreover, Jesus is not depicted as gaining mastery over the animals (cf. the stilling of the storm Mark 4:39). Nor are the animals depicted as fleeing from him. Jesus is simply with them in a *companionable* sense. In the context of the saying, the wild animals are not first on the side of the demons and then, like the angels, subordinate to Jesus as is argued by Gibson (1995, 78-9). In Mark's brief phrase, the animals neither attack Jesus nor do they minister to him. Instead implicitly they are with him as companions in the loneliness of the wilderness. Mark has portrayed Jesus as neither making pets of them nor as being in conflict with them but as allowing them to be themselves (Bauckham 1994, 20). Thus in Mark 1:13b there is an echo of Job 5:22b-3:

> ...And shall not fear the beasts of the earth
> For you shall be in league with the stones of the field,
> And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you.

Wild Animals – Peace *with* or *from*?

Bauckham's discussion of Messianic peace with the wild animals is drawn from the ideas expressed in Isaiah 11:6-9. He argues that this peace is between wild predatory animals and human beings along with their domestic animals rather than between wild predators and their prey (1994, 15). Certainly the idea of peace with the wild animals in Isaiah is expressed from a human perspective. However, since 'the lion will eat straw like the ox' (Isa 11:9), Bauckham concedes that peace between wild predator and wild prey is implied. That Isaiah 11:6-9 denotes peace with not merely

peace from the wild animals in the relationship between people and wild animals is correctly noted by Murray (1992, 105-110; *pace* Bauckham 1994, 16 n.34). Murray uses as an example of peace from, the text of an ancient Sumerian poem in which there are no predators:

> In Dilmun, no raven cries '*ka*',
> no partridge (?) cries '*dardar*',
> no lion kills,
> no wolf carries off a lamb.
> Unknown is a dog harassing kids,
> unknown is a hog devouring grain.
> (If) a widow spreads malt on the roof
> no bird of the skies comes foraging,
> no pigeon gorges itself (Pritchard 1969, 37-8).

Had the meaning in Isaiah (11:6-9) been peace from, then the wild animals would either have remained at a distance or ceased to exist. However, the amicable association expressed by 'the wolf will lie down with the lamb...' is indicative of peace *with* as Murray has argued. This idea is also expressed by Philo who looks towards a similar peace (*De praemis et Poenis* 15.88).

In the Graeco-Roman view, argues Barasch, the peace was to come about through the absence or disappearance of predators (1985-6, 240). Certainly when Virgil wrote of the herds of goats being unafraid of lions, he seems to have envisaged the absence

of the predators, since he continues: 'the serpent too shall perish' (*Eclogues* 4:21-24). Horace also wrote of an absence of predators: 'nor does the bear at eventide growl 'round the sheepfold, nor the ground swell high with vipers' (*Epodes* 16:51-52). A similar view was held by Aelian who depicted the absence of snakes on Crete (*De Natura Animalium* 5.2). This view might be termed peace *from* wild animals[5]. However, peace *with* wild animals is found in the myth of Orpheus where all the animals including the fiercest fall under the spell of the music (Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1629f; Pseudo-Callisthenes 1.42, 6.7)[6]. Peace with wild animals is also found at the sanctuary of the Syrian goddess Atargatis, where large bulls, horses, eagles, bears and lions graze together and do not harm man (Lucian *De Dea Syria* 41). Thus both understandings of peace were found in Graeco-Roman writings.

The Scriptural Tradition

Mark was aware that Jesus, as a first century Jew, was heir to a scriptural tradition of regarding wild animals as part of creation (Gen 1-2) which was under continuing providential care (Ps 104:10-13, 17-22, 27-30). This understanding of providential care was also to be found elsewhere in the Synoptic tradition in sayings attributed to Jesus (Matt 6:26-30; Luke 12:24-28). This knowledge of scriptural tradition would also include Wisdom literature which frequently referred to wild creatures and their attributes in a positive light (Prov 6:6). Certainly there were references to predators, in the scriptural tradition, but these animals were normally only a problem if they attacked domestic flocks (1 Sam 17:34) and, as we have seen, there was no tradition among Jewish people of hunting such animals for sport. In the main, therefore, attitudes to wild animals in scriptural tradition were favourable.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter we asked which of the suggested typologies, for the text of Mark 1:13 as a whole, was likely to be the correct one. We also asked if Mark envisaged Jesus as regarding the animals as creatures to be avoided if not actually feared. Or if Mark perceived Jesus as accepting the companionship of the wild animals as part of the created world.

We looked briefly at the kinds of animals, which Jesus may have encountered in the desert and we also surveyed the various attitudes to wild animals in the Jewish and the Graeco Roman worlds. When we looked at the various typologies of the Exodus, Second Adam, Messianic Peace and Elijah, which have been suggested for the background of Mark 1:13 as a whole, we found that there was no exact parallel. Each typology reviewed lacked at least one of the elements of temptation by Satan, ministration by angels or encounter with wild animals.

The closest typology was that of Elijah, who spent forty days in the wilderness (1 Kgs 19:4-8), who went through a testing period, but was tested by God not Satan (1Kgs 19:9-18), who was ministered to by angels (1 Kgs 19:5-7) and, most importantly, had a positive relationship with wild creatures in the ravens who fed him (1 Kgs 17:4-6). Certainly Jesus was not fed by the wild creatures, yet Elijah's succour by the ravens provided a precedent for a positive relationship with wild creatures. Elsewhere, Mark has other passages linking Jesus with Elijah, for example in the Transfiguration scene where Elijah is mentioned even before Moses (Mark 9:4). In the Transfiguration scene, Mark also has allusions to Isaiah 42:1 (Mark 9:7

cf. 1:11). It may be that Mark did not intend any one particular typology but has drawn on more than one source in Hebrew Scripture (cf. Mark 1:2b-3 derived from Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3).

When we looked in detail at the phrase 'with the wild animals' to determine whether the allusion referred to wild animals in a hostile, neutral or friendly fashion, we considered various texts from Hebrew scripture and the Apocrypha. References to wild animals in Hebrew scripture fall into various categories. Some texts speak of wild animals in a literal sense as predators (1 Sam 17:34) or as food (Deut 14:5). Other texts refer symbolically to attributes of the animals such as beauty (Cant 2:8-9) or industry (Prov 6:6). However, yet others refer to wild animals as part of creation (Gen 1:20-25) and under God's care (Ps 104:10-13, 17-22, 27-30). Providential care is also found in the Synoptic Gospels in Matthew 6:24-30; Luke 12:24-28. Therefore wild animals were not simply regarded as either predators or food items.

In support of their argument, those who interpret the phrase as referring to animals in a hostile sense, quote items from the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, namely: (a) the righteous man will 'gain the mastery over every wild beast' (*T. Issach.* 7.7) and (b) 'the wild animals will be afraid of you' i.e. of the righteous man (*T. Naph.* 8.4; *T. Benj.* 5.2). Nevertheless, the text of *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* was probably edited, if not written, by the same person, so that the same idea is being repeated twice over.

On linguistic grounds, the phrase 'with the wild animals' was more likely to have conveyed a meaning of companionship than of hostility. Moreover, Jesus is not depicted as having mastery over the animals (cf. the stilling of the storm in Mark 4:39), nor do the animals flee from him. The wild creatures neither attack Jesus nor minister to him. Implicitly they are with him as companions in the loneliness of the desert. Drawing on the idea of Messianic peace with the wild animals, derived from Isaiah 11:6-9, we concluded that the idea was peace 'with' rather than peace 'from' since, in the ancient literature we surveyed, peace 'from' meant an *absence* of predators.

Finally, of the various interpretations given to Mark 1:13 as a whole, we found that the closest links were with the story of Elijah, combined with an allusion to Messianic peace 'with the wild animals'. This Messianic peace we concluded was the background to Mark 1:13b. Thus Mark depicts Jesus, at the outset of his ministry, living in a peaceful relationship 'with the wild animals'.

Endnotes: 'With the Wild Animals'

[1]Fascher gives a survey of interpretations in German literature up to 1961 (1965, 562-70).

[2]Bauckham correctly notes that many of these animals have become extinct in Israel (1994, 20). However, there are various nature reserves in Israel such as Hai-Bar where there are concerted efforts not only to conserve species which are threatened such as the addax, but also to reintroduce species such as the ostrich now extinct in Israel (Regenstein 1991, 213-4).

[3]Henten distinguishes between the MT of Deuteronomy 33:8-11 where the Lord tests Levi (i.e. Moses) and the LXX version where the people test Moses (1999, 359).

[4]See Guelich for discussion of παῖς in Isaiah 42:1 as 'servant' or 'son' (1989, 33-4).

[5]In Thesleff's brief survey of the paradise myth in ancient Greece, none of the descriptions listed mention predators except the reference to a snake in Homer (*Iliad* 2.301-321), (1986, 131).

[6]Cited in Guthrie (1952, 40).

2. A Gathering of Eagles

'Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together' (Matt 24:28)[1].

Many have taken the reference to 'eagles' as being a derogatory phrase, 'an ugly and offensive saying' according to Guenther (1989, 140). Because this saying, attributed to Jesus, may lead to such a pejorative interpretation, it cannot be ignored in our overall argument that, in the Synoptic tradition, Jesus was portrayed as having a broadly sympathetic attitude to the living natural world. Although the 'eagles' saying is placed against the same background of apocalyptic imagery in Luke 17:37 and Matthew 24:28, it is given a different emphasis in each passage. Matthew places it after the verse which compares the coming of the Son of Man to a lightning flash illuminating the sky from east to west. In Luke, the saying is used as a climax to the minatory sayings that precede it. What are we to understand from this cryptic saying which does not at first sight seem to be relevant to either the Matthean or Lukan setting? The two contexts of parousia and judgement will be considered more fully later. However, while context is important in determining meaning, a verse may be considered in isolation also. Are the 'eagles' to be understood literally or metaphorically? Does the term ἀετοί refer to real carrion eaters, or is this a subtle allusion to the Roman legions? Or is this, perhaps, a proverbial saying used in both contexts? In this chapter we will be seeking answers to these questions, and also exploring the apparently derogatory nature of the reference.

The 'Eagles' as Legionary Standards

The idea has been mooted that the reference in question was to the Roman legionary eagles (Kreitzer 1996, 57-68): this possibility has been noted earlier by others, notably Fitzmyer (1981-5, 2:1173). In support of his claim that the 'eagles' in the text referred to the Roman legions, Kreitzer has recourse to numismatics. Here, Kreitzer combines the 'lightning' and the 'eagles' sayings (Matt 24:27-8) with reference to numismatics. However, some of the coins which he uses to illustrate his theory do not even depict eagles (1996, 67, figs. 25,26,27), and those which do show both eagles and the thunderbolt/lightning are higher value gold coins (1996, 58, fig. 22; p. 66-67, figs. 23, 24, 28). Although it is not impossible that the ordinary people of Galilee and Judaea should have seen these gold coins (Matt 10:9), the people were likely to have been more familiar with the silver denarius (Matt 20:9-10, 13) and the lower value copper coins (see excursus three on coinage). In any case, the thunderbolt on the coins is an unlikely link with the lightning flash of Matthew 24:27. Why would Matthew have envisaged Jesus as making a reference to the pagan symbol of Jupiter's thunderbolt in connection with the parousia as Kreitzer's numismatic link appears to imply? In this respect, Kreitzer's numismatic argument, although imaginative, fails to convince since he has established no link between the thunderbolt/lightning of the coins and the lightning flash of Matthew 24:27. There is, however, more to be said concerning the 'eagles'.

That the eagle standards were synonymous with the legions is attested in Roman writing (Juvenal *Satires* 8.52). Would the same symbolism have been as evident to the Jews?[2] There is a reference in 1QpHab 3:11-12 to the Kittim which '... come

from afar, from the islands of the sea, to devour all the peoples like an eagle which cannot be satisfied' (Vermes 1994, 341). This text is certainly a link between the bird and the Roman army in Jewish eyes, but a comparison of an army to a bird of prey is not the same as a figurative use of the bird of prey to represent the army; a simile is not a metonym[3]. Even Josephus, writing *after* the First Jewish war, explains: 'Next came the ensigns surrounding the eagle which in the Roman army precedes every legion because it is the king and bravest of birds' (Josephus *J.W.* 3.6.2 §123). Here Josephus is using the eagle to refer to the standard, not to the legion *per se*. There is a Talmudic reference which does use the eagle to refer to the Roman army: 'A couple of scholars have arrived from Rabbath who had been captured by an eagle' (*b. Sanh.* 12a); but this reference is too late to give support to Kreitzer's theory.

The argument that the eagles refer symbolically to the Roman legions is not completely implausible in a first century Palestinian context. However, the argument would have carried more weight had Kreitzer opted for evangelistic redaction (cf. Guenther 1989, 149), since in the earlier half of the first century, there were no legions stationed in Galilee or Judaea[4]. It may be conceded that there was likely to be folk memory of the legionary eagle in Jerusalem under Varus (Josephus *Ant.* 17.11.1 §299) and also of the golden eagle of Herod (Josephus *Ant.* 17.6.2 §151), but see below. Such folk memory *may* be an argument for an early first century Jewish understanding of 'eagles' used metonymically, but this interpretation of the word is more likely to have come into being after the First Jewish War, when the legionary standards would have been all too evident. Moreover, in support of his theory, Kreitzer mentions the use of eagles to represent Rome in 4 Ezra 11:1-35, but this

work was written, at the very earliest, towards the end of the first century (Stone 1990, 9).

An interpretation of the 'eagles' as Roman legions *may* be feasible in the Lukan context of judgement, but such an interpretation is more likely to be derived ultimately from Lukan redaction (because of the historical absence of legions in the land during the first half of the first century CE.). In its Matthean context, the eagles saying is more likely to be linked with the previous verse's depiction of the coming of the Son of Man being as unmistakable as lightning; this being so, the 'eagles' here are surely real birds and not a metonymic reference to the Roman legions. The two contexts will be discussed more fully later.

The Roman legionary standards were not the only symbolic use of eagles. The famous golden eagle which Herod the Great had erected at the Temple (Josephus *Ant.* 17.6.2 §151) may have been derived from an eastern symbol which had originated in Mesopotamia as a psychopomp carrying the hero Etana to heaven. From Mesopotamia the eagle spread as a royal and solar symbol to Persia, Armenia and Syria (Goodenough 1965, 12:149). The eagle as a symbol of power was also used widely in Greece, where it was associated not only with Zeus but was also found on the Omphalos at Delphi (Thompson 1936, 15)[5]. It seems unlikely that Herod's golden eagle was intended as a symbol of Roman might (*pace* Horsley 1995, 136) or as an object of worship *per se* (cf. Exod 20:4-5) as Herod normally took care to avoid offending Jewish proprieties and religious sensitivities (Goodenough 1965, 12:28; Rogerson and Davies 1989, 194; Schürer et al. 1979, 1:312-3). In discussing

the location of the gate involved, Richardson points out: 'Herod avoided needless offense and would hardly have spent the huge sums he did on the Temple to curry Jewish favor only to lose it by putting an eagle right on the Holy Place' (1996, 16). According to Josephus (*Ant.* 17.6.2 § 152) the rabbis encouraged a group of young men to take the eagle down and destroy it because ' the law forbids those who take account of it to erect images or representations of any living creature' (but cf. 2 Chron 4:1-5, 13-14). Interestingly, the eagle is found as decoration in several second century synagogues, along with representations of other creatures (Goodenough 1965, 12: 42-43; Feliks 1971a, 337-38, figs. 1,2). While the dating of these decorations is too late to have a direct bearing on Herod's eagle, again they are unlikely to represent the legionary Roman eagles. In short the ill-fated golden eagle of Herod was most probably derived ultimately from a Syrian sun symbol (Goodenough 1965, 28, cf. Richardson 1996, 16 n.4).

Eagles or Vultures?

If for the moment we accept the premise that the 'eagles/vultures' saying deals with real birds, it may be useful to try to determine what is meant by ἀετοί. In classical writings ἀετός is sometimes used where a species of vulture is meant (see note [5]), but there were distinctions made between the two groups as in Hera's revengeful prophecy against the Trojans: 'No eagle shall come again to the Trojans but vultures to the feast, the day that the Danaoi gather the spoils of their labour' (Antipater Thess. *Anthologia Palatina* 9.77). With regard to the New Testament saying under discussion, Jeremias argued that: 'Instead of ἀετοί (eagles) we must understand γυπές (vultures). Only vultures feed on carcases, eagles hunt living prey. It is a

question of mistranslation; the Aram. *nišra* can mean either "eagle" or "vulture".' (1972, 162 n.46).

Lachs took Jeremias's argument further and tried to differentiate between carrion-eating vultures gathering on the Matthean πτῶμα, which he translates as 'carcass' (Matt 24:28), and live-flesh eating eagles gathering on the Lukan σῶμα, which he translates as 'body', presumably one freshly killed (Luke 17:37b), (1987, 321). However, Lachs has created a false dichotomy both linguistically and ornithologically. While πτῶμα always refers to a dead body (Bauer 1979, 727-28; LSJ 1940, 2:1549), σῶμα has a wider semantic range (Bauer 1979, 799; LSJ 1940, 2:1749); but, in this instance, σῶμα means human corpse (Bauer 1979, 799; Fitzmyer 1981-5, 2: 1173). Furthermore, the feeding habits of the two groups of birds are not so clear cut as Lachs (following Jeremias) maintains. Eagles eat both carrion and living prey (see below) and the lammergeier (or bearded) vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*) kills tortoises that it drops from a height[6]. Like *nešer* (which it always translates in the LXX), ἀετός can refer to both eagles and vultures, the context determining which is meant and, in some instances, a particular species is indicated (Driver 1955a, 9; 1958, 56). Primarily, however, *nešer* refers to the griffon vulture (Driver 1955a, 8; cf. Feliks 1971a, 337; 1971b, 232). The reference to baldness in Micah 1:16 'make yourselves as bald as the eagle' most likely means the griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) which has a white downy covering (a 'white patch') on its head and neck, giving the appearance of baldness (Driver 1955a, 8).

While it would be difficult to determine species of birds of prey riding high on thermals, identification is much simpler when the birds have alighted on carrion. Tristram remarks that within five minutes of a corpse appearing it would have attracted griffon and Egyptian vultures, eagles, kites, buzzards and ravens (1880, 169). Maintaining that when necessary eagles would kill for food, but otherwise would eat carrion, Tristram listed the species of eagles that he has observed on carrion. Below are brief notes on the birds that may be included in the term *nešer* used generically.

The Possible Identity of *Nešer*

With a wing span of three metres, and a body a full metre in length, even a single griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) is an impressive bird: a gathering of this species soaring on a thermal was at one time the outstanding ornithological feature of Palestine (Tristram 1884, 95). The griffon is a sociable bird, not only on the wing but also in feeding on the carcasses of large mammals (Nicolai et al. 1994, 66). Tristram, seeing five hundred pairs of these vultures in the valleys in the neighbourhood of Genneseret, remarked that the birds must be used to long periods of abstinence, as the locality itself would be unlikely to provide enough sustenance. From being the most familiar ornithological feature in the country, the griffons' numbers have dropped dramatically following the use of poisoned bait put out for jackals and rodents (Feliks 1981, 133; Paz 1987, 56).

In contrast to the griffon, the Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) is not sociable, but will join the griffons at a carcass. It frequents village refuse dumps,

where it scavenges food scraps (Nicolai et al. 1994, 66; Hollom et al. 1988, 50). It is probably the *rāhām* of Leviticus 11:18 (Tristram 1880, 169, cf. Driver 1955a, 16). Along with the griffon, the Egyptian vulture is described by Aristotle, who refers to the birds as γυπές, the Egyptian vulture as being small and whiter, the griffon as being larger and more ash-coloured (*Historia* Animalium 592 b7).

The lammergeier vulture (*Gypsaetos barbatus*) is even larger than the griffon, but the former rather solitary bird does not join the others at a carcass, instead it waits until it can take the long bones which it drops from a height until they break and the marrow is accessible. The lammergeier is the *peres* or 'bonebreaker' of Deuteronomy 14:12 (Holmgren 1988, 46-7; Feliks 1971b, 233; but cf. Driver 1955a, 9-10). The bird's habit of dropping tortoises from a height has already been noted. It is now extremely rare in Israel (Paz 1987, 55).

With a wingspan of over two metres, the golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetus*) may be found over the entire country in the winter, when it frequents mountainsides and plains (Hollom et al. 1988, 65; Bodenheimer 1935, 168). Although it kills living prey as do all the eagles, like all the eagles it also eats carrion. Holmgren argues that *nešer* refers to the golden eagle and that *nešer* is derived from the same root as *nēzer* 'crown' (of consecration), and that this refers to the golden feathers on the top and nape of the bird's head (1988, 94-5). However, there is no evidence to show that the two words share a common root. Although the LXX always translates *nešer* with ἀετός and never by γύψ , it is noteworthy that the Arabic *nisr* can refer to 'eagle' as well as 'vulture'. Driver indicates that at times *nešer* also refers to the eagle,

particularly the golden eagle (1955a, 20; 1958, 56). The eagle is also used to convey both the power and the care of God for the people of Israel: 'I bore thee on eagles' wings and brought you to myself' (Exod 19:4). The aspect of care is also reflected in the seldom seen habit described in Deuteronomy 32:11b of the eagle carrying its young.

'Like an eagle that stirs up its nest[7],
that flutters over its young,
spreading out its wings, catching them,
bearing them on its pinions (Deut 32:11)[8].

There were other eagles that Tristram observed and which may be included in the term *nešer*. The tawny eagle (*Aquila rapax*) with a wingspan of one and three quarter metres frequents both mountains and plains. Always one of the rarer eagles in this part of the world, it feeds primarily on carrion and frogs (Paz 1987, 66; Peterson et al. 1965, 78). Bonelli's eagle (*Hieraaetus fasciatus*) is probably the commonest eagle in Israel: a resident, found normally in the hills, it feeds mainly on reptiles, birds and small mammals as well as carrion (Paz 1987, 68; Nicolai et al. 1994, 64; Bodenheimer 1935, 169). The scarce spotted eagle (*Aquila clanga*) inhabiting the areas round lakes, rivers and marshes, feeds mainly on small rodents, snakes, birds and frogs, but it will also eat carrion (Nicolai et al. 1994, 62). At one time a resident species, it is now a winter migrant (Paz 1987, 66).

Although Tristram also included kites, buzzards and ravens in his observation of carrion eaters, he did not mention species. The kites are probably too small to be

included under the term of *nešer*. Ravens have their own term *'ôrēbim* and will be discussed in a later chapter. Buzzards, however, are almost the size of an eagle but probably fall outside the category of *nešer*. *The* buzzard of Palestine according to Bodenheimer is the long-legged buzzard (*Buteo cirtensis*) which is ubiquitous in the country (1935, 169). While the gathering overhead is most likely to refer to the griffon vultures (Cansdale 1970, 142) the gathering at the carcass includes several species of birds (both eagles and vultures) which may be subsumed generically under the term of *nešer*/ἀετός.

Allegorical Interpretation of the Text

While there have been many attempts to interpret the saying allegorically, the following list gives a representative selection[9].

(i) The body as Jesus and the eagles as disciples (Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* 4.14.1.). (ii) The body as a spiritually dead Israel and the eagles as false prophets (Polag 1977, 95).

(iii) The body as the wicked and the vultures as judgement (Gundry 1982, 486).

(iv) The body as false prophet and the eagles as unjust people (Davies 1993, 168).

The range and variety of allegorical interpretations must surely throw doubt on the wisdom of attempting to interpret the passage allegorically. Because the saying in Matthew follows the verse on the coming of the Son of Man being as unmistakable as lightning (Matt 24:27), many commentators have understandably taken the point of the 'eagles/vultures' saying (at least in Matthew) to refer to the visibility of the

parousia (Gundry 1982, 487; Gnilka 1986-88, 2:326; Guenther 1989, 145; and (with caution) Davies and Allison 1988-97, 3: 355-56). They have understood the reference to the eagles/vultures as being either the visibility of the carrion to the birds or the visibility of the eagles/vultures to observers; and they have understood this visibility, in turn, as reflecting the unmistakable appearance of the parousia. In Luke, because the 'eagles/vultures' saying comes at the end of the discourse and follows after the sayings 'one shall be taken, the other left' (Luke 17:34-36), commentators have understood the interpretation of the verse on the birds of prey to be related to judgement. Here, in the Lukan context, the saying more readily lends itself to symbolic interpretation since eagles and vultures do not sit in judgement.

The Text as a Maxim

However, the saying seems to be a maxim rather than an allegory. The style of 'where... there...' is used elsewhere (Job 39:30; and in the AV version of Eccl 8:4; 11:3). The observation that 'where there is carrion, there will be birds of prey' is made in Graeco-Roman writings: Aelian makes the literal observation 'γύψ νεκρῷ πολέμιος ' (*De Natura Animalium* 2.46); Seneca likens rapacious relatives at a death bed to the vulture 'At hoc hereditatis causa facit: vultur est, cadaver expectat' (*Epistulae* 95.43). In a slightly different format the observation is also found in the Talmud: a bird of prey in Babylon can see carrion in the land of Israel (*b. Ḥul.* 63b)[10]. Bultmann (1968, 99, 102-3) thought the 'eagles/vultures' saying was originally a secular *mašal* which came to be attributed to Jesus (so also Dibelius 1934, 250 n.2). Of such proverbial expressions Bultmann says '... either the meaning

is apparent from the metaphor itself, or the saying denotes a concrete meaning by being used in a particular situation' (1968, 168).

If Bultmann is right and the 'eagles/vultures' saying was originally a maxim, then the original point of the saying was most likely to be *certainty*, that: wherever there is a dead body then 'it must follow, as the night the day' that eagles and vultures will gather over the body[11]. In Matthew the maxim follows the saying about the coming of the Son of Man. Rather than picking up on the *visibility* of the coming, it is more likely that the maxim refers to the *certainty* that it is the Son of Man who is coming (cf. Matthew 24:23-26, particularly verse 24). In answer to the argument that the reference to lightning suggests visibility rather than certainty, it may be counter-argued that there is the certainty of illumination over the entire sky when lightning flashes. The curious reference to the light travelling from east to west is picked up by Davies and Allison, who ask if the tradition referred originally to the morning star, with the light of Venus travelling from east to west (1988-97, 3: 354 n.173). They point out that the Aramaic for lightning and the morning star are from the same root (*brq*). They may be right, in which case there is the certainty of the path that the light will follow. However, as with any retranslation into Aramaic, the suggestion has to be treated with caution. It may well be that the reference to east and west is simply a way of expressing comprehensiveness as in Matthew 8:11 (Hagner 1993-5, 2:707).

In Luke however, the position is different both literally (within the passage) and metaphorically with regard to understanding. Here, the saying is set against a darkly foreboding background of doom and here the passage is more likely to be understood

metaphorically by the commentators, whether as the Son of Man coming in judgement or, as Kreitzer opines, the Roman legions. In Luke, there is an implication of judgement in the 'eagles/vultures' saying, following as it does after the division sayings 'one will be taken, the other left' (Marshall 1978, 669). In the sayings of division (Luke 17:34-6) there is ambiguity about whether it is the one taken or the one left who is to be judged (Fitzmyer 1981-5, 2:1172; Marshall 1978, 668): nevertheless, there is no doubt that there will be judgement. In other words, in this context, the 'eagles/vultures' saying expresses the *certainty* of coming judgement. The connecting phrase of Luke 17:37a ('And they said to him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them...') is considered to be redactional by Fitzmyer (1981-5, 2:1173). The disciples' question of 'Where?' (Luke 17:37a) suggests a certain obtuseness, not unknown elsewhere (Mark 8:14-21), since they have already been told that there will be no uncertainty about the day of the Son of Man's coming (Luke 17:24). The answer 'Where the body is...' reinforces the emphasis on certainty and also indicates some irony on the part of Luke (if Fitzmyer is right and this phrase is redactional). Thus, in both the Matthean and the Lukan contexts, the 'eagles/vultures' saying refers to the certainty of what is depicted in the preceding verse(s): in Matthew it is the certainty that it is the Son of Man who is coming; in Luke it is the certainty of judgement.

Opinions have been divided as to whether the Lukan or the Matthean position was the earlier in the Q tradition. The majority of commentators have thought that Matthew's was the earlier and that Luke moved the saying to the end of the passage on judgement (so Guenther 1989, 145; Fitzmyer 1981-5, 2:1173). Not every one

follows this line of reasoning, however: from B. Weiss (1876, 514) onward, there have been supporters of the idea that Luke's position was the earlier (Gundry 1982, 486-7). Guenther's contention that Luke moved the saying from its position in Matthew, because Luke did not like the association of the saying with the Son of Man reveals Guenther's own attitude to the birds (see below), (1989, 143). If Luke had simply disliked the proximity of the 'eagles/vultures' saying to the reference to the coming of the Son of Man in Matthew (assuming that Matthew's version was the earlier), all Luke had to do was omit the 'eagles/vultures' saying altogether, since the Matthean passage reads perfectly well without it (as is shown by the parallel passage in Luke 17:22-24).

Attitudes to the Eagle/Vulture

There does not seem to have been any feeling of revulsion or repugnance on the part of either Luke or Matthew in using the saying (against Guenther 1987, 143). The two groups of raptorial birds (eagles and vultures) were certainly regarded as being unclean and therefore included among those ritually forbidden as food (Lev 11: 13-19; Deut 14: 12-18). Yet there seems to have been an ambivalent attitude to these birds given that the 'eagle/vulture' is used in Hebrew Scriptures of God as an expression not only of power, but also of parental care towards the people of Israel (Exod 19:4; Deut 32:11). As Vogel points out, the eagle is 'a symbol of fatherhood, of Israel, of God Himself' but it is also 'associated with rapacity, blood and death' (1998, 89). Both the eagle and the vulture as symbols of power were common throughout the Ancient Near East: the Egyptians, Syrians, Mesopotamians all used the eagle or vulture in art. It is possible that this aspect of the Hebrew attitude

towards the bird was derived from these other Ancient Near Eastern sources and remained a feature of Hebrew thought, even though the bird was later to be included in the lists of proscribed foods.

On the topic of uncleanness, the eagle/vulture heads the list of the unclean birds in both the Levitical and Deuteronomic lists. While physical attributes are listed in the list of mammals proscribed as food (Lev 11:4-7; Deut 14:7-8) no such attributes are found in the list of birds, although later rabbinic thought supplied these: 'any bird that seizes food in its claws is unclean' (*m. Ḥul.* 3.6); 'they lack crops, they lack an extra toe on the back of the foot, the sac in their gizzards cannot be peeled off, and they tear their prey' (*Sifre Deut.* 103; *b. Ḥul.* 61a). Although the rationale behind the inclusion of species in the Torah lists, may well be a complex mixture of the cultic, the behavioural, and the physical rather than due to any one single over-arching reason, the *main* reason for the inclusion of the eagle/vulture is probably that as a bird of prey it consumed the blood, which was forbidden to people (Gen 9:4; *m. Ḥul.* 3.1)[12]. Although it may be argued that it is the birds' aspect as carrion-eater which is found in the saying in Matthew 24:28, the birds were regarded as unclean only in the context of proscribed foods. Elsewhere, as we shall see the eagle/vulture was used as poetic illustration of God's command of the wild creatures (Job 39:27-30).

Although Guenther (1989, 140) dismisses the maxim as 'an ugly and offensive saying', the saying is not in itself either ugly or offensive. In a literal sense, the 'eagles/vultures' saying is a straightforward observation that wherever there is carrion, vultures (and eagles) will gather and clean it up. Certainly both σῶμα and

πτῶμα tend to refer to a human corpse rather than the carcass of an animal, but normally it would be animal bodies which would be eaten by the avian scavengers. The idea of carrion-eaters may seem repugnant, but the alternative was disease-carrying putrefaction. Thus, the saying appears to be a straightforward observation from nature like Job 39:27-30:

'Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up
and makes his nest on high?
On the rock he dwells and makes his home
in the fastness of the rocky crag.
Thence he spies out the prey;
his eyes behold it afar off.
His young ones suck up blood;
and where the slain are, there is he.

Here 'Where the slain are, there is he', like the rest of the passage, is simply a factual statement about the birds' attributes and behaviour. The context for the passage in Job is God's (not humanity's) control of the natural world. Thus, there is no pejorative criticism of the birds themselves. The passage under discussion (Matt 24:28) is also therefore a straightforward observation from nature, in this instance, used as a maxim.

Conclusion

We looked at the possibility that 'eagles' was an allusion to the Romans. The eagle standards were synonymous with the legions in Roman literature (Juvenal *Satires* 8.52). However 'eagle' does not appear to have been used as a *metonym* for the legions in Jewish writing until a Talmudic reference of the fourth century CE (*b. Sanh.* 12.4). Moreover, there were no Roman legions stationed in Judaea or Galilee during the first part of the first century CE. (We conceded that there may have been folk memory of Varus in Jerusalem in 4 BCE and also that there were Roman legions stationed in Syria during the first half of the first century CE). If such an allusion was intended, it was possible in the Lukan context of judgement, but was much less likely in the Matthean context of the Parousia.

We looked also at the varying allegorical interpretations. Here, Luke's context of judgement also lends itself more readily to an allegorical interpretation. Yet, as we have seen, the attempts to find an allegorical interpretation have failed to reach any agreement, since it is unlikely that the saying was ever intended as an allegory in the first place. We concluded that both Luke and Matthew have used the expression as a proverb denoting 'certainty' and derived from a natural occurrence of birds gathering over a body (Job39:30). In Luke 17:37 the certainty was of coming judgement: in Matthew 24:28 it was the certainty of the parousia.

The saying is a continuation of the Wisdom tradition that looked at creatures in the natural world and commented on their behaviour in the wild, sometimes drawing comparisons between the behaviour of the creatures and the behaviour of people (for

example Proverbs 6:6-11). When we looked at the identity of the 'eagles' as real birds we thought the most likely possibility was the griffon vulture (although eagles and other raptors joined the vultures at a carcass). As Goulder correctly notes, this sapiential tradition was followed extensively by Matthew, and less so by Luke (1974, 101). It was a tradition which was carried into rabbinic literature: 'Be as strong as the leopard, and swift as the eagle, fleet as the gazelle and brave as the lion to do the will of thy father which is in heaven (*m. ʿAb.* 5.20). It is perhaps also significant that, for the early Christians, the eagle became the symbol of the Gospel of John, the spiritual gospel.

Thus it is likely that the saying was a maxim expressing certainty, 'where there is carrion, there will be carrion-eaters' (where there is smoke, there is fire), which was attributed to Jesus by both Matthew and Luke. A maxim is used for its aptness to the point at issue: the maxim itself is of little importance in the context. The saying simply depicted an observation of a natural occurrence (Job 39:30) with no pejorative implications towards the birds themselves since, elsewhere in the Hebrew tradition, the eagle/vulture was used as a metaphor for God. At worst, here, the saying is neutral.

Endnotes: A Gathering of Eagles

[1]The translation of ἀετός will be discussed fully later in the chapter. Where the living bird is meant, 'eagle/vulture' is used.

[2]In the extended metaphor of the Animal Apocalypse (1 Enoch 90 passim) eagles are figuratively understood to be the Macedonians (Tiller 1993, 358). Tiller argues that the inclusion of vultures in the text, alongside eagles, is probably secondary (1993, 31-2).

[3]At one time the Republican Legion had five standards, an eagle, a wolf, a minotaur, a horse and a boar (Pliny *Historia Naturalis*. 10.5.16). In 104 BCE, Marius made the eagle supreme because of its association with Jupiter (Webster 1985, 135).

[4]The legion which had been left in Jerusalem in 37 BCE (Josephus *Ant.* 15.3.7 §72) had gone by the death of Archelaus (Smallwood 1976, 60-1; 114 n.36). The topic of legions in first century Judaea and Galilee, is discussed more fully in my chapter on the Gerasene swine 'The Demon Legion and the Pigs: Mark 5:1-20'.

[5]Thompson lists all the aspects of the eagle in classical literature s.v. ἀετός (1936, 2-16); see also s.v. γύψ (1936, 82-7).

[6]The story of Aeschylus being killed by a lammergeier vulture's dropping a tortoise on his head is related by Aelian (*De Natura Animalium* 7.16) and Pliny (*Historia Naturalis*. 10.3.7) who refer to the bird as a type of eagle. N.B. the Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) and the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) have also been seen dropping tortoises from a height (Paz 1987, 55, 64).

[7]'Stirs up its nest' is not the best translation. The verb *yā'îr* (hiph. impf. of *'ûr* 'to awake') may be translated as 'to arouse to activity' (BDB 1979, 735); while *qēn* may refer to the nestling, or fledgling (BDB 1979, 890). See Tigay: 'like an eagle who arouses his nestlings' (1996, 304). The behaviour of a female eagle towards her eaglet in getting him to fly has been described: 'she... flew towards him, almost buffeting him with her wings as she swooped past the nest. Again and again she hovered round...': the young bird then spread out his wings and flew away (Macpherson 1910, 44). Although this particular instance is not cited, Macpherson is referred to as an authority on the behaviour of the golden eagle and its young by Cramp (1980, 2:241).

[8]The phenomenon of the adult bird catching the young on its wings is described by various observers: see Driver, who lists and cites references (1958, 56-7). Holmgren also maintains that the golden eagle has been observed in this behaviour but does not cite her witnesses (1989, 98).

[9]Davies and Allison give a more extensive list of possible interpretations of the saying in Matthew: however, not all of the interpretations give an allegorical equation of 'body' equalling ... 'eagles' equalling ...(1988-97, 3:355-6).

[10]The word *'ayyāh* which is translated variously as hawk, falcon or kite is to be understood generically in Leviticus 11:14 and Deuteronomy 14:13 (BDB 1979, 17). Driver (1955a, 11) says the word may refer to any large falcon but, incorrectly, he

includes the buzzard as a member of the family of falconidae: the buzzard belongs to the accipitridae (Cramp 1980, 2:6).

[11]*Hamlet* I.III.79 (Shakespeare, 1993).

[12]For a range of various interpretations see Levine (1989, 246), Tigay (1996, 138) and Douglas (1975, 270, 273; and her reinterpretation, 1993, 23).

3. The Dogs: pets, puppies or pariahs?

The story of the Syrophoenician woman is told in Mark 7:24-30 and in Matthew 15:21-28. In the Markan account the woman begs Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter. In the Matthean version she asks Jesus to help her since her daughter is possessed of an unclean spirit. In both narratives Jesus is portrayed as refusing at first: 'It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs'. In the woman's reply that even the dogs get the crumbs, she picks up on the saying 'dogs/children' and appears to acknowledge the priority of the children/Jews over the dogs/gentiles. Jesus relents and the child is healed. Like the curing of the centurion's child/servant (Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10) the healing is done at a distance.

Among the questions raised by the incident of the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30; Matt 15:21-28) are two which relate to the dogs. Are the dogs to be understood as pet dogs, as the puppies of working dogs or as scavenging pariahs? Is there a difference in attitude to dogs to be found in comparing the statement attributed to Jesus and the reply attributed to the Syrophoenician woman? Since the reference to dogs, attributed to Jesus, appears to be of a pejorative nature and, since dogs as sentient creatures are part of the natural world, then it is desirable to investigate further. In this chapter it will be argued that there was indeed a difference in attitudes arising from separate cultural perspectives. The question also arises as to whether Matthew and Mark regarded the possibility of a separate gentile mission in relation to Jesus. It will be argued that there was no separate gentile mission as such, although Jesus is shown as giving help on occasion to gentile people.

The Context and Setting of the Story

In the Markan version, the setting is the region of Tyre and Sidon, (7:24b). In Matthew 15:21, there may be some doubt as to whether Jesus was understood to have entered the area (Davies and Allison 1988-97, 2:546; Hagner 1993-5, 2:440-41; cf. Luz 1990-97, 2:433). It would not have been strictly necessary for Jesus to pass through Tyrian territory in order to reach Caesarea Philippi (*pace* Jeremias 1958, 36)[1], and, in any case, there were no natural boundaries between northern Galilee and the region of Tyre (Freyne 1980, 8). It should also be borne in mind that there were mixed populations even in Galilee and Judaea, particularly where there were Hellenistic towns such as Sepphoris. Moreover, there would be trade between Jew and gentile (Safrai 1994, 427). Nevertheless, at least by implication, the setting is predominantly gentile.

That the woman herself is described as a 'Greek' and a 'Syrophoenician' (Mark 7:26) indicates that she is a gentile, which is the reason for the initial rejection of her request. While Ἑλληνίς 'Greek' may refer to a 'hellenized' local person belonging to the upper class, it is best to take the Greek word as an indication of her culture and religion (Gnilka 1978-9, 1:292). Certainly the word 'Greek' is usually used in the New Testament to refer to a gentile as opposed to a Jew (Guelich 1989, 385; Hooker 1991, 183). The word 'Canaanite' Χαναναία (Matt 15:22) reflects back to the original pagan inhabitants of the area before the Israelites entered (Exod 13:5). Here, this harking back to Hebrew history, reflects Matthew's particular interest in Hebrew scripture. Here also, perhaps, the historically deep-rooted ethnic division emphasises even more in Matthew the woman's non Jewishness, than the

term Ἑλληνίς in Mark, with which at least some of Mark's readers would identify (being themselves gentile). It is, however, perhaps making too much of the woman's nationality and the location to suggest that she was 'marginalised' (Hartig 1999, 486). There is nothing in either of the texts to support the idea that the woman had previously ceased to be a gentile by 'living like the sons of the kingdom' (as argued by 2 Clem. *Hom.* 2.19).

In the ensuing conversation the woman turns what some have interpreted as insult (Burkill 1967, 173), test of faith (Gundry 1982, 312), or challenge (Hooker 1991, 183) into a rejoinder which wins the desired result, the healing of her daughter. Some have even seen the entire story as 'a product of the church' (Bultmann 1972, 39). The fact that in the dialogue the woman gets the better of Jesus makes it 'a scene that is not easily dismissed as a fabrication by some fan of Jesus like Mark' (Smith 1998, 498). Theissen, in fact, suggests that Jesus' 'cynical' (!) reply stemmed from bitterness at the economic conditions whereby the hinterland of Galilee with its Jewish farms supplied the more affluent Phoenician coastal cities and in times of hardship the Jewish suppliers went without themselves (1992, 73-5, 79). This suggestion is possible, since elsewhere in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus is portrayed as speaking out against the wealthy who cling to wealth without sharing it (Mark 10:23-5; Luke 16:13). Certainly, the dependence of the coastal towns upon the hinterland would still have continued during the times at which the gospels were written. However, it may be making too much of the reference to the setting to infer that economic conditions were seen as the reason for the reply, since it was not the social status of the woman, but her non-Jewishness which had occasioned the refusal. In

any case for Matthew and Mark the important factor was that the woman was a gentile.

Gentile Mission

The main issue of the context is, of course, the attitude to the gentiles. According to Matthew, Jesus' concern was solely with the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt 15:24). Yet in Mark there is a possible extension of Jesus' ministry, as implied by 'let the children first be fed' (Mark 7:27a). In the Matthean version the disciples urge Jesus to send the woman away (15:23b) and it is after this, that he makes the remark about being sent only to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt 15:24). It is possible that the phrase 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' is redactional as Matthew makes use of the sheep metaphor elsewhere (Heil 1993, 698, 704). Certainly, it was not the most obvious reply to the disciples (Davies and Allison 1988-97, 2:549-50). It may be that here, Matthew wished to emphasise the importance of Jesus' earthly mission to the Jews since 'A positive focus on Jews does not necessarily imply a negative view of gentiles' (Levine 1988, 142).

When the disciples say 'send her away' ἀπόλυσον αὐτήν , (Matt 15:23b) Lachs suggests that this should read ἀπόλυσον αὐτόν 'send it away' (the demon), (1987, 248). At first sight this may seem feasible, but there are no variant readings to support Lachs' theory. Moreover, the verb normally used for the 'casting out' of demons is ἐκβάλλειν (Matt 7:22; Mark 1:34; Luke 11:18 passim). Lachs argues that in this instance (Matt 15:23b) ἀπολύω means to be freed from the bonds of sickness, thus the translation should be 'release her (the daughter) from the bed of

sickness for she (the mother) is crying after us' (1987, 248). Certainly this use of ἀπολύω in the sense of 'release from sickness' is found in Luke ἀπολέλυσαι τῆς ἀσθενείας (Luke 13:12) and in Josephus ἀπολυθή τῆς νόσου (*Ant.* 3.9.3 §264): but, in both of these instances it is used with the *genitive*, after a *passive* verb form specifying the illness, whereas here, the accusative is used and the verb is active. Thus Lachs' suggestion is not really tenable. Therefore as the story stands in Matthew, the disciples were not urging Jesus to grant the woman's request (even for the sake of peace from her importuning), but were simply asking him to send her away (*pace* Meier 1980, 172).

In Mark 7:27 the phrase 'let the children first be fed' (leaving open the possibility of later help) is original according to Taylor, who argues that the woman found encouragement from it (1966, 350). Others, however, maintain that the phrase is redactional, perhaps echoing Paul's 'to the Jews first, then to the Greek' (Gnilka 1978-9, 1: 290, 292; Guelich 1989, 385-86). The phrase is more likely to be redactional, as 'Let the children first be fed ...' would suggest a final clause of 'for it is not right to feed the dogs before the children' rather than 'for it is not right to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs'. In any case it would have been of no comfort to the woman, whose daughter's need was then and there, and for whom no vague future promise would have been sufficient. In his argument for a separate gentile mission in Mark, Wefald states 'The primary way I try to make sense of the Markan text is simply to read the text as it is, in a narrative fashion as a reader would' (1995, 4 n.2). By implication this way of looking at the text would appear to suggest reading Mark as a continuous narrative, which is borne out by the references to 'The

Four Journeys onto Gentile "Territory"' (Wefald 1995,9-13). Since Wefald argues that Jesus' journey to the region of the Decapolis in Mark 5:1 was part of a separate gentile mission, why then is Jesus portrayed as refusing help to a Greek woman on the grounds that she is a gentile in the later story in Mark 7:24-30? If the healing of the gentile woman's daughter was intended as the beginning of a separate gentile mission in Mark, why was the story not placed earlier?

As an argument that gentiles were to be admitted to the Jewish Christian community before the end time, the pericope of the Syrophoenician woman in Mark is ambiguous, since the argument could just as easily be made that it showed the general exclusiveness of the original mission: this aspect is found more noticeably in the version in Matthew. The story [in Mark] '...seems too vacillating to lend support to either side in the argument' (Hooker 1991, 182). To say that it meant a change of plan for Jesus to include the gentiles is not borne out by the ensuing chapters in Mark or indeed in Matthew (*pace* Gundry 1982, 314). For example, some have argued that the feeding of the four thousand (Mark 8:1-9) took place on gentile territory and therefore was a gentile feeding (Pesch 1976-7, 1:400, 403-5). However, the geographical location is imprecise, while the connecting phrase 'and in those days' (Mark 8:1) does not in itself confirm that the feeding took place in the predominantly gentile locality mentioned in the previous verses (Hooker 1991, 188). If the feeding of the four thousand did in fact take place in the Decapolis, it may be that the feeding in Mark involved both Jewish and gentile people (Guelich 1989, 403; Pokorny 1995, 335), but was not intended specifically for gentiles. The references by Mark to Jesus' visiting of areas which were predominantly gentile may have meant that Mark

visualised Jesus as visiting the Jewish inhabitants of such areas: alternatively, it could mean that Mark saw Jesus as being prepared, on occasion, to extend his ministry to gentiles, but not that Jesus had a separate gentile mission.

The only other recorded healing, where it is explictly stated that a gentile is involved, is that of the centurion's child/servant (Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10). The geographical location for the healing of the deaf-mute (Mark 7:31) is indeterminate (Guelich 1989, 391-2): while the religion and race of the Gerasene demoniac(s) (Mark 5:1-20;Matt 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-33) are also unknown. Thus it would appear unlikely that Mark is depicting Jesus as having decided on a separate gentile mission (*pace* Swartley 1997, 19). Instead the gentile healings appear to be exceptions to the general practice. It is of course possible that Jesus did heal other non-Jewish people, but that there are no accounts extant. In none of the Synoptic Gospels is Jesus represented as visiting any of the Hellenistic towns such as Sepphoris which lay near to his home town of Nazareth, (cf. Batey 1984, 250-1, 256). Had the pro-gentile Mark or Luke known of any such visits, they would surely have included these as evidence of a gentile mission on the part of Jesus.

It is probably true to say that Matthew saw the gospel as being offered to the gentiles after the resurrection (Fenton 1963, 256). Earlier, Matthew has portrayed Jesus as avoiding a mission to the gentiles (10:5-6), while any healings of gentile people (Matt 8:5-13; 15:21-8) are exceptions to the rule. After looking at other possible interpretations of Matthew 10:5-15, Luz argues that the commission to the Jews only is, in effect, an explanation of the post-Easter commission to the gentiles

(28:19) as even though Jesus and his disciples had devoted themselves to Israel, Israel had rejected Jesus (1990-7, 2:92-3). Luz may be correct here, since, as he points out, elsewhere in the gospels (Luke 9:51-56; 10:30-35; 17:11-19; John 4) Jesus is depicted as coming into contact with Samaritans oftener than other Jews did (1990-7, 2:90). (Although Samaritans were not strictly speaking gentiles, since they observed Torah, they were outside mainstream Judaism.) As in the parallel account in Mark, the location of the feeding of the four thousand in Matthew 15:32-38 is uncertain: indeed it may be a doublet to the feeding of the five thousand (Matt 14:13-21). With reference to the feeding of the four thousand, Meier correctly says 'There is no reason to differentiate Mt's second account by supposing that it symbolizes a gentile church' (1980, 175). In the discussion of the pericope of the Syrophoenician woman, as described in Matthew, Davies and Allison rightly ask 'Does it not make more sense to conclude that Mt 15.21-8 par. is based on a historical incident in which Jesus made plain his exclusive commitment to Israel and yet was compelled also to acknowledge the faith of a Gentile woman...?' (1988-97, 2:545). Thus, according to both Matthew and Mark, the healing of a gentile is an exception to the rule rather than an indication of a separate gentile ministry by Jesus.

The Dog in the Ancient World

In trying to determine the attitudes shown to dogs in the verbal exchange depicted between Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman, it may be useful to look at the background history of the dog in the Ancient Near East. The dog was the first animal to be domesticated by man: the earliest remains (which were found in Europe) date back to 14,000 BCE, while other remains have been found in Ain Mallaha, Israel

dating back to 13,500 BCE: these animals were probably used as hunting dogs (Gautier 1990, 116-7)[2]. It is generally accepted that the ancestor of the dog was the wolf[3]. Remains of dogs are present in some of the earliest levels at Jericho, dated soon after 7000 BCE (Cansdale 1970, 121). Whether the remains at Jericho were those of guard dogs or pariah dogs is not clear. Even in the ancient world there were five recognisable groups of dogs: the spitz, the sheepdog, the pariah, the greyhound and the mastiff (Keller 1909-13, 1:91)[4].

Attitudes to the Dog in the Jewish World

Much has been made of the negative attitudes found in the Hebrew Bible towards the dog (Strack Billerbeck 1:722; Michel 1965, 1101). Such attitudes certainly existed as the dog was well known as a scavenger (1 Kgs 22:38; 2 Kgs 9:36). Indeed, the dog was probably most familiar to the Hebrews as a member of one of the packs of pariah dogs which roamed the area (Ps 59:6, 14). Moreover, the dog was often used as a comparison in derogatory sayings about people: 'they are all dumb dogs... the dogs have a mighty appetite' (Isa 56:10-11). However, there are also some more positive aspects to be found concerning the dog in Hebrew scripture, for example Job 30:1, 'whose fathers I would have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock'. Although the context of the text in Job suggests that the dogs may not have been regarded highly, nevertheless, they were entrusted with guarding the precious flocks of sheep and goats[5]. Indeed rabbinic tradition says that Jacob had one or two dogs for each of his droves (*Gen. Rab.* 96). Since the shepherd leads the flock in the east, the dogs were not required to control the movements of the separate groups of sheep and goats, each of which had its own bell-laden leader (Klotz 1981, 146). A possibility

that the guard dogs were originally pariah dogs which had attached themselves to the shepherds is put forward by Tristram, who describes how half a dozen dogs are left outside the caves which shelter the sheep at night (1880, 141).

A sympathetic understanding of the qualities of the dog as a metonym for the 'temple servant' in Deuteronomy 23:18 is put by Thomas, who says that: '*keleb* when it refers to temple servants, while it has the normal meaning 'dog', has attained the idea of the faithful dog of god (*sic*), his humble slave and devotee' (1960, 426). While the original meaning of 'dog' as temple servant in other Semitic languages may have implied the qualities of faithfulness in both the animal and the servant to the pagan understanding, it was not likely to do so to the Israelite, as Thomas concedes. That *keleb* in Deuteronomy 23:18 may actually refer to a real dog (thus returning to the traditional interpretation) is put forward by Stager (1991, 41). Independently, and with close attention to historical and philological detail and literary references (including *m. Tem.* 6.3), Goodfriend also argues that the reference is to a real canine (1995, 381-6, 395-6). However, while Stager suggests that the reason for the prohibition of 'the price of a dog' was the dogs' sacral and cultic significance for the Phoenicians (1991, 40-1)[6], Goodfriend avers that the reason was the dogs' '...indiscriminate consumption of blood (a forbidden substance even if its source was a permitted animal)...' (1995, 395).

A dog as a companion animal is found in Tobit (5:16; 11:4) when the dog accompanies Tobias on his journey to Ecbatana and back to Nineveh. In the Vulgate version of the story, the dog is mentioned yet again: 'Then the dog which had been

with them on the way, ran before; and coming as if he had brought the news, showed his joy by his fawning and wagging his tail.' Scholars have attributed the dog's presence in the story as being due to influences ranging from Iranian to Hellenistic (Moore 1996, 197-8). Moore suggests that the references are 'a vestige of some secular folk tale' which the author used in the story (1996, 197). If Moore is correct, we have to wonder why even this 'vestige' was retained. It would not have been beyond the bounds of possibility that a young Jewish man such as Tobias could have had an attendant dog that trotted along after him on both parts of his journey. Previously in Israel, Tobit (the father of Tobias) had flocks of sheep (1:7), which would have had dogs to guard them. Possibly some of the dogs even accompanied the family into exile and one of these or its offspring could have left with Tobias on his journey. Although it cannot be said with certainty that this is envisaged in the story, neither can it be ruled out completely.

In the Jewish setting, in historical times at least, dogs were regarded as being on the boundary line between domestic and wild animals (*m. Kil.* 8.6). People were expected to feed dogs but not pigs as they were responsible for the former but not the latter (*b. Š abb.* 155b). However, according to Schochet (1984, 179) the owner of the dog was not obliged to feed it before himself, as was the case with livestock (*b. Gitt.* 62a). In an interesting interpretation of Exodus 22:31 'you shall cast it to the dogs', Adler says that the rationale was apparently that the dogs should be fed as 'non favored animals who are also the community's beneficiaries' (1986, 69)[7]. The idea of 'non-favored' animals' being fed is also found in the anecdote of the hungry, but apparently ignorant, Rabbi Amran begging the master rabbi (who wanted to help

only the studious) to feed him 'as the dog or raven' (*b. B. Bat.* 8a). While the dogs may have benefited from the carcass of an animal killed by wild beasts, it is rather doubtful that this was the real reason behind Exodus 22:31 (cf. Genesis 9:4). Goodfriend points out that it was the *guard* dogs of the flocks who were the recipients of the carcasses torn by wild beasts (1995, 391-2 and notes 44, 45 and 46). There are rabbinic references to the animal being used as a guard dog particularly in frontier towns, but it was to be kept on a chain through the day and permitted to roam only at night (*b. B.Qam.* 80a, 83a).

There was perhaps a later development in Jewish thinking which was more sympathetic towards the dog in that the animal's qualities of fidelity were recognised. A fable, attributed to the second century Rabbi Meir, tells the story of the dog which, when it saw a snake poisoning the curdled milk of its master, barked to warn its master who failed to heed the warning. The dog drank the milk itself and died saving the lives of its master and fellow shepherds who erected a monument to the memory of the dog (*y. Ter.* 8.46a). Abel's dog stood over his master's body to prevent its being devoured by wild animals (*Pirqe R. El.* 21) while a dog was given to Cain for his protection (*Gen. Rab.* 22:12). It must, however, be conceded that these stories were written down in the 4th century and may be too late to be directly relevant to a situation in the first century CE. Whether these stories show a development of a more sympathetic attitude towards the dog or whether they reflect an attitude of positivity which had earlier been tacitly observed by some Jewish people must remain open to question. There is also the possibility that the rabbis simply referred to dogs in a symbolic fashion without any underlying concern for the animal *per se*. The literary

evidence would suggest that dogs were not kept as pets by Jewish people and that those dogs which were kept as guard dogs, either for the home or for the flocks, were kept for pragmatic reasons only. Yet, as in every society there are exceptions to the rule, there may have been a few individuals who maintained a friendlier relationship with their dog(s). Under the influence of the Exile and the Babylonian culture such a one may well have been Tobias.

The Dog in the New Testament

In the Synoptic Gospels, the only entirely literal reference to dogs is in Luke 16:21, where the dogs lick the sores of Lazarus: here it is most likely that pariah dogs are meant. However, since the beggar is at the rich man's door, it is possible that guard dogs could be involved (cf. Fitzmyer 1981-5, 2:1132). As the description is of the miseries of Lazarus, the attentions of the dogs are not seen as being welcome. By contrast, it is possible that historically in Phoenicia, dogs were seen as having curative powers by the very action of licking wounds (Stager 1991, 39). The other Synoptic reference is Matthew 7:6, 'Do not give dogs what is holy....' This is based on a cultic rule of not giving sacrificial meat to dogs (*m. Tem.* 6.5). In the context of the gospel the saying may have a range of meanings (Davies and Allison 1988-97, 1:676) which include an interpretation of the saying with reference to the eucharistic meal (Llewelyn 1989,101). No matter how the saying is interpreted, in every case, the dogs are seen in a pejorative light. Other references to dogs in the New Testament are both figurative and derogatory. In Philippians 3:2, the term 'dogs' is applied to the Judaizing Christians in conjuction with the terms, 'the evil-workers' and 'those who mutilate the flesh': here, 'dogs' appears to be the reversal of the term

as a reference by the Jews to gentile people (1 Enoch 89:42), (so Martin, 1967, 137). Revelation includes 'dogs' figuratively as among those who will be excluded from the holy city (22:15). Later, Ignatius referred to the heretics as 'mad dogs' (*Eph.* 7:1). Yet, a kindlier view was given by Basil the Great (4th cent. CE) in speaking of the particular traits of animals: '...the dog is grateful and mindful of friendship.' (*Homilies* 9.3).

The Dog in the Graeco-Roman World

In the Graeco-Roman world, the attitude to dogs was generally more positive. An early example is the recognition of the returning Odysseus (see below). Originally dogs were used for hunting and, in the Graeco-Roman world, hunting was regarded as a sport (particularly of the well-to-do) as well as a means of obtaining food. Xenophon, Arrian and Oppian all produced works called *Cynegetica* on hunting with dogs. Oppian discusses the various breeds used (*Cynegetica* 368-76). By contrast in the Jewish world, hunting was a means of obtaining food (Gen 27:5; Lev 17:13) or killing the predators of flocks (1 Sam 17:34-35): it was not a sport. Significantly, no Israelite king is portrayed as a hunter. The principle of *ṣa'ar ba'alê ḥayyim* ('the pain of living things') forbad killing for killing's sake: 'this concept although nowhere enunciated in scripture, was accepted as a biblical ordinance...' and was a 'central principle in rabbinic literature' (Shochet 1984, 151). Since hunting dogs had to be trained, there was possibly a closer bond between dog and owner: this may well have been a factor in the different attitudes between the two cultures, but was not a reason in itself. Probably, the animal's habit of scavenging was at least one of the reasons

why the dog was not particularly liked by the Israelites (cf. the pig in the next chapter).

In the Graeco-Roman world, probably the most famous example of a dog was Homer's touching picture of Argos, the faithful hound, who recognised his master Odysseus after the nineteen year absence (*Odyssey* 17.300-4). The animal's value on the farm as sheep dog and as guard dog was recognised: 'the shepherd's friendly force' (Horace *Epodes* 6.5); 'No farm is safe without dogs' (Varro *De Re Rustica* 1.19.3). Interestingly, there was a difference in approach to the treatment of the dogs even among the Roman writers. Cato advocated that 'Dogs should be chained up during the day so that they may be keener and more watchful at night' (*De Agri Cultura* 124). Varro, by contrast, suggests 'As to dogs you should keep a few active ones of good traits rather than a pack, and train them rather to keep watch at night and sleep *indoors* (my italics) during the day' (*De Re Rustica* 1.21). Virgil also recommended the proper care of dogs (*Georgics* 3. 404-6). Dogs were also kept as 'table dogs for show' in Ancient Greece (Homer *Odyssey* 17. 309-10) and in the Roman world also, as pets like the little lap dogs described by Nossis (*Anthologia Graeca* 601) and Martial (*Epigrams* 1.109)[8]. Indeed, '...love for canine pets in particular was one of the most attractive features of the ancient Roman character' (Toynbee 1973, 109). Of the dog's fine qualities, Columella wrote the following eulogy: 'What servant is more attached to his master than is a dog? What companion more faithful? What guardian more incorruptible? What more wakeful night watchman can be found? Lastly what more steadfast avenger or defender?' (*De Re Rustica* 7.12.1).

The Syrophoenician Womans's Attitude to Dogs

How did the Syrophoenician woman regard the reference to the dogs? It has been suggested that her understanding of the reply was tempered by the tone which Jesus used 'half whimsically, and with a smile' (Rawlinson 1949, 99). Yet neither nuance of tone nor facial expression are conveyed by the written speech of either account. Moreover, the context makes it clear as the narrative stands that Jesus, as he is depicted in both accounts, did not intend initially to grant the woman's request (*pace* Lachs 1987, 248). However, Burkill carries the metaphor too far with his idea that the implication is that the woman is being called 'a bitch' or even 'a little bitch' (1967, 173). Nor is it likely that the metaphor is 'an attempt to shrug the woman's request off with a joke' (Iersel 1998, 250). In order to answer the question of how the woman herself understood the reference, we must look firstly in more detail at the cultural differences with regard to dogs, particularly in the house, and secondly look at the 'crumbs' in this context. Perhaps, however, a glance at the question of language should come first.

If we assume for the purpose of this discussion that the verbal exchange actually took place, then there are three possibilities regarding the language used in the oral conversation: (a) the woman addressed Jesus in Greek and he replied in the same language (b) the woman, recognising Jesus as Jewish, addressed him in Aramaic and he replied similarly (c) the woman spoke in Greek and Jesus replied in Aramaic (assuming that each understood the language of the other). The Greek woman could have understood Aramaic (Theissen 1992, 69-70).

If the exchange took place in Aramaic then, although there is no diminutive derived from *kalbā* [9] (the Aramaic for dog), there is the possible use of *gûr* which, though usually translated 'whelp' or 'cub'[10], may be used of a young dog or puppy: 'raise not a gentle cub of a vicious dog...' (*Lev. Rab.* 19.6). Alternatively, there is the word *gûryāytā* referring to very young dogs which require flesh to be cut up for them (*b. Šabb.* 155b).

If, like the written word in Mark 7:27-28; Matthew 15:26-27, the spoken word was Greek then we have a diminutive κυνάριον. The Attic grammarian Phrynicus declares that κυνίδιον is the correct diminutive and that κυνάριον probably came into use through a comic poet, perhaps implying that κυνάριον is a later term (Rutherford 1881, 268). Keller, on the other hand, states that κυνάριον and κυνίδιον are synonyms for a dainty little animal like the Maltese dog regardless of its age, while σκυλάκιον denotes a very young dog regardless of its breed (1909-13, 151). However, the first two diminutives appear to be used to mean both 'little dog' and 'puppy' (LSJ 1940, 1:1010).

Diminutives may be divided semantically into four types: (1) deteriorative (expressing contempt), (2) endearing, (3) small, with a metaphorical shift in meaning, (4) true diminutives and faded diminutives (Swanson 1958, 146). While Swanson's article shows a good statistical methodology, unfortunately, he has not taken into account social and cultural factors in his choice of κυνάριον as an example of the 'endearing' type of diminutive in New Testament usage. On the one hand, if a diminutive in meaning is intended, then in a Jewish household the word

κυνάριον is more likely to refer to puppies (of dogs kept as guard dogs) than to pet dogs since we have no evidence of pet dogs being kept in Jewish homes (see below). On the other hand, Mark's fondness for the diminutive form of the word is noted long ago by Turner who suggested that it represented a colloquial usage (1928, 352). The latter part of Turner's suggestion was adopted by Pesch (1976-7, 1:389). Therefore the argument that Jesus was softening an answer by a diminutive does not *necessarily* follow (cf. Taylor 1953, 350). Thus in both languages, there is the possibility of a diminutive being used literally to refer to small dogs (i.e. puppies). Although a verbal exchange in Greek may have been possible, it was more likely to have taken place in Aramaic. After looking at the cultural differences with regard to dogs in the respective worlds of Jew and gentile, we will return to a final conclusion regarding the language and the words used.

Pets, Puppies and Pariahs

Luz, arguing that κυνάριον refers to housedogs and not to puppies, states that dogs were regarded in the same way throughout the ancient world and that there would be housedogs everywhere (1990-97, 2:435). Although he concedes that there was no special love of dogs among the Jews ('Auch im Judentum gab es keine besondere Hundefeindlichkeit...') he maintains that they would also have had housedogs (1990-97, 2:435). Nevertheless, the references he gives to lend support to his claim that housedogs were kept throughout the ancient world are drawn mainly from Greek literature. While these references verify the ubiquity of household dogs in a Hellenistic environment, the references which Luz has drawn from rabbinic sources (*Midr. Ps.* 4.8; *b. B.Bat.* 8a) unfortunately do not confirm that there were adult dogs

kept in Jewish homes (1990-97, 2:435 n.59). The first of these references which Luz cites is the *Midrash Ps* 4:8, which contains the story of the king's meal, where the guests seated in the entrance to the palace see dogs coming out with pheasants, capons and calves' heads in their mouths; this leads the guests to expect an even greater bounty for themselves. This tale (attributed to the third century Rabbi Joshua b. Levi) certainly refers to the presence of dogs in a king's household, but the story is apocryphal and probably bears little resemblance to everyday life even in a better class Jewish household. Moreover, in citing his second rabbinic reference, the appeal of Rabbi Amman 'feed me as the dog or raven' (*b. B. Bat.* 8a), Luz appears to miss the point that the linking of dogs with ravens suggests the scavenging and carrion eating habits of both. Certainly, it may be argued that both groups of creatures receive food 'undeservedly' (Adler 1986, 69): there is also the aspect of providential care (which will be examined more fully in a later chapter). Nevertheless, the reference lends no support to the argument that adult dogs would be kept in a Jewish household in the same way that adult dogs were kept in Greek and Roman homes. Although Luz's interpretation is a kindly one with regard to the dogs, in that he states they were as valued in Jewish homes as elsewhere, the references he has chosen do not support this: instead they do refer to dogs being fed, but not necessarily as part of a Jewish household. Guard dogs were more likely to be fed outside at their posts.

In discussing the text of Mark 7:27b, Theissen also has implied that pet dogs were intended: 'Of course, it is possible to think of faithful house pets[2]. These got the table scraps (*Jos. As.* 10:13 [sic]), and the diminutive κυνάριον applies to them' (1992, 62). In his accompanying footnote (p.62, n.2) Theissen says that 'the distinction

between one's own house pets and unfamiliar strays is important precisely in the question of table scraps. Aseneth throws her idolatrous food out the window onto the street with the words: "my royal dinner and my fatted beasts have I given to the [strange] dogs" (*Jos. As.* 10:14, cf. 13:8).'. Although the word 'strange' is found only in the Slavonic version in 13:8, nevertheless, the context in both verses makes it plain that scavenging dogs are intended: the food is thrown on to the street for the dogs, just as the clothing is thrown on to the street for the poor in the previous verse (10:13). Thus the reference is not an argument for house dogs being intended in the words attributed to Jesus in Mark 7:27b.

In the woman's reply there is a specific reference to the dinner table. Dufton's short note grasps the significance of this in that the woman as a Greek may well have had dogs in the house, whether as household pets or puppies (1989, 417). Jesus, as a Jew, would have been more accustomed to dogs being outside in the street, 'he who eats in the street is like a dog' (*Der. Er. Rab.* 57b) or at best in a courtyard as a guard dog. However, it is possible that young pups may have been in at least some Jewish homes since dogs were bred as guard dogs (*b. B. Qam.* 80a, 83a). Moreover, there is the advice to widows not to rear dogs in their homes in case they might be suspected of immoral practices (*b. Abod. Zar.* 22b): the fact that there is such an injunction would suggest that people did rear young dogs in their homes. (See also note on 'little cubs'). Again this does not mean that the young dogs were kept as pets.

It is perhaps significant that the phrase uses 'throwing' (βαλεῖν) bread to the dogs (Matt 15:26; Mark 7:27) rather than as in Matthew 7:6 'giving' (δίδωμι). Thus we

have the image of the Jewish person throwing unwanted scraps of food to the scavengers or perhaps a guard dog outside. The Greek woman, from her own tradition, is speaking of house dogs or puppies, which would receive titbits from the table[11]. The picture of dogs eating what had fallen from the table was a familiar one in Greek literature: 'he reminded him of dogs who pick up and eat, the fragments which fall from a feast....' (Philostratus *Vita Apollonii* 1.19); see also below (Aristophanes *Equites* 415). Thus from her cultural perspective, she was more likely to understand the saying in two ways: in a literal sense as 'children come before pets and should be fed first' (a sentiment which probably holds true in every culture), and at the same time in a figurative sense as 'children stand for Jesus' own people the Jews, and pet dogs stand for gentiles, but both are fed from the same table'. Pesch, in fact, argues that the woman's answer was to be understood as an *a minore ad maius* and not allegorically (1976-7, 1:389). (Presumably, Mark's readers would understand the story from the woman's perspective.)

Having considered the language of the verbal exchange, the use of diminutives and the cultural differences between gentiles and Jews with regard to dogs within the home, how do we reconcile the perspectives of Jesus and the woman with regard to the dogs? It is a given that 'children' is to be understood as the children of Israel i.e. Jews and that 'dogs' equal gentiles: this being so, the word used by Jesus would then most probably be either κύων or *kalbā*. Although understanding the figurative use of the word 'dogs', the woman in her reply instinctively referred to dogs as she knew them, possibly as pets, but at least as housedogs. Thus, it was likely to be the woman who first used the diminutive, which was then transferred back into Jesus' initial

reply to her request. Certainly there is no textual support for this deduction, but it does convey linguistically the tension between the two cultures and goes part way to explaining the woman's readiness to accept the metaphor. The other factors were her desire for the healing of her daughter and her willingness to accept the priority of the Jews.

The Bread

The bread is to be understood on two levels here, as it is in the feeding stories. At the literal level the woman refers to 'bread crumbs' ψιχία falling from the table. It has been suggested that the word ψιχία does not refer to crumbs but to large pieces of bread which the diners used to wipe their fingers, and which were then thrown to the floor and later thrown out of the door (Montefiore 1927, 2: 538; cf. Hooker 1991, 183). Derrett suggests that the children would throw scraps of food to their favourite puppies especially if they had wiped their fingers on the bread (1973, 170). It would appear to have been the custom to gather bread which had fallen on the floor since to leave the crumbs lying would 'lead to poverty' (*b. Ḥul* 105b): this practice seems to owe its origins to superstition rather than to frugality per se, since 'crumbs in a house lead to poverty: the demons rest upon them on the nights of Sabbaths and on the nights of the fourth days' (*b. Pesaḥ.* 111b)[12].

According to Hamel, people used 'pieces of bread, which were at the same time the spoon, the plate, and the basic food of the meal' to feed from the main dish of gruel and vegetables, the *miqpeh* (1989, 12). Since the bread was not to be returned to the common dish to avoid spreading communicable diseases (*t. Ber.* 5.8) either those

eating finished the bread down to the presumably dry piece held in the fingers, or perhaps dropped the small remnants on the floor as (for poor people at least) the bread was hard and dry. Since ψιχίον is a diminutive of ψίξ, the picture of such a small piece of bread dropped on the floor may be nearer the mark than a large piece used for wiping the fingers. Yet, there is always the possibility that it is a diminutive used without true diminutive force. Certainly in Greek households the diners wiped their fingers on pellets of bread ἀπομαγδλίαι, which were then literally thrown to the dogs to eat, 'on finger pellets like a dog' (Aristophanes *Equites* 415). Derrett also speaks of dog's dough (*m. Ḥul.* [*sic*] 1.8) as though it were specially made for dogs (1973, 170 n.5). However, the inference in the Mishnaic text (*m. Ḥal.* 1.8) is that because the dough was full of bran it was fit for dogs, but it was a dough which was consumed by poor people, particularly shepherds who were likely to give the leavings of this meagre fare to the sheepdogs (Hamel 1990, 39). Therefore, dog's dough was not made specially for dogs.

In the average Jewish household scraps of bread, like other unwanted scraps of food, would most likely be given to the guard dog outside. If there were young puppies in the house they would probably have eaten anything which might have fallen from the table. However, as we have seen, puppies in a Jewish household would be the exception rather than the rule. From the perspective of a first century Palestinian Jew, the idea of not throwing bread to the dogs is likely to mean not throwing food meant for human consumption to the pariah dogs or even to the puppies of a guard dog. The Greek perspective where dogs were regarded more favourably, would certainly see the children being fed before the dogs, but at least in

the more affluent households there may well have been pet animals who would receive titbits. Thus the Syrophoenician woman even while perceiving and acknowledging the significance of the dogs/gentiles metaphor, would not have found the allusion as offensive as would a Jewish woman.

Conclusion

The first question asked was: 'Are the dogs to be understood as pet dogs, as the puppies of working dogs or as scavenging pariahs?' We also asked if there was a difference in attitude to dogs to be found between the statement attributed to Jesus and the reply attributed to the Syrophoenician woman. A survey of the literature showed that in both the Graeco-Roman world and in the Jewish world, dogs were kept to guard flocks and homes. Dogs were also kept as pets and as hunting dogs in the Graeco-Roman world. However, hunting for sport was not a Jewish activity and there is no evidence in the literature to suggest that Jewish people kept dogs as pets. Indeed, the dog was regarded as being on the borderline between domestic and wild animals (*m. Kil.* 8.6).

The conversation, as it is described, between the Syrophoenician woman and Jesus shows signs of this cultural divide. In the words attributed to Jesus, he speaks of throwing the bread to the dogs. People were expected to feed dogs, as they were responsible for them (*b. Šabb.* 155b). Here, the bread is being thrown to the guard dogs that would be outside the house. In a Jewish context, the only dogs likely to be inside the house would be the puppies of a guard dog. The Syrophoenician woman, on the other hand, speaks of dogs eating crumbs that fall from the table. Therefore

the woman, according to the story, envisaged the dogs in the house. In the Syrophoenician's milieu the dogs, or puppies, under the table may well have received titbits. In any culture, however, children would be fed first.

The original expression referring to the dogs that was attributed to Jesus was not likely to have been in a diminutive form in either Greek or Aramaic. The diminutive form probably originated with the woman herself, who as a Greek was more likely to have had either puppies or pet dogs, in the house. The diminutive could refer to either puppies or small dogs or even have no diminutive force. Thus in the conversation as it is depicted, Jesus was envisaged as speaking of throwing bread to guard dogs that were kept outside. The woman, on the other, hand is probably speaking of housedogs that may even have been pets.

The exchange would appear to rule out a separate gentile mission. The healing of the gentile woman's daughter was an exception to the rule, just as dogs, even puppies, in a Jewish household were exceptional. The Markan references to Jesus' visiting of predominantly gentile territory may have been included because Mark wanted to show that on occasion Jesus was prepared to extend his ministry to gentiles. The story of the Syrophoenician woman is too ambiguous to suggest a specific gentile ministry. Matthew, on the other hand, wanted to emphasise the importance of the Jewish Christians.

In the main, Graeco-Roman literary references to dogs tended to be favourable to the animal, whereas the same could not always be said of Jewish texts, which pertained

to dogs. Generally, dogs were not regarded highly in Jewish life, nevertheless, they were used as guard dogs both for the flocks and for houses, where they would (with the exception of puppies) normally be kept outside in the courtyard. In spite of their rather lowly status in the Jewish world, the dogs' quality of fidelity was acknowledged not only in the Graeco-Roman world but also in the Jewish. In the first century Jewish world of Jesus the working dogs would be fed but not pampered. The same may be said of working dogs in many countries today that are kept outside.

Endnotes: The Dogs: pets, puppies or pariahs?

[1]The territory of Phoenicia (the area of Tyre and Sidon) veered sharply eastward toward Kedesh and then northeast from there, but it was possible to arrive at Caesarea Philippi without going through Phoenicia. See Smith and Bartholomew (1915, 43).

[2]Differences in dentition and bone structure separate the skeleton of the domestic dog from those of other canines like the wolf. Dates and places given for the earliest instances of the dog and other domestic animals are based on skeletal evidence of the earliest non-controversial skeletal remains (Gautier 1990, 116).

[3]Lorenz had a theory that there were two ancestors of the dog: firstly the jackal (*Canis aureus*) which gave rise to the 'aureus' type of dog, which was more sociable; and secondly the wolf (*Canis lupus*) which gave rise to the 'one man' dog or 'lupus' (1965, 114-27). Gautier maintains that the wolf was the most likely ancestor, and that perhaps other canids like the jackal in Europe and the coyote in North America contributed to the genetic makeup of the domestic dog (1990, 116).

[4]Several types of dog from the small curly-tailed spitz to the powerful mastiff can be found illustrated in Richter (1930, plates LI-LV, figs.158-174).

[5]Cansdale (1970, 123) suggests that Job may not have been a Hebrew, but even though Job lived in the Transjordan, he is represented as believing in the Israelite God. See Andersen (1976, 55-64) for a discussion of the date and language of Job.

[6]The finding of hundreds of dogs buried in a fifth century BCE cemetery at Ashkelon (Phoenicia) prompted Stager to suggest that there was a link with the Phoenician healing deities of Eshmoun and Reseph-Mukol, (Stager 1991, 40-1). Stager cites the fifth century limestone Kition plaque, which lists dogs among the Temple personnel, as part of his argument. However, there is disagreement from Helen Seder, who found a smaller dog burial, dating to the 6th century BCE and containing only eight dogs at Beirut. Seder argues that if Stager were correct, there would have been dog figurines found at the sanctuary of Eshmoun in Sidon (*BAR* 1996, 22 Sept-Oct: 24). See also Goodfriend (1995, 396-97) and Wapnish (1993, 74-6).

[7]See Grossfield (1988, 65-6 n.16) for discussion of the Targumic version of Exodus 22:30 (Vat. 448) which reads *torn from a live animal.*

[8]For a description of pet dogs in the Roman world, see Toynbee (1973, 108-22).

[9]Although there is mention of an Arabic diminutive ***kulaib*** (GKC §86g n.1), it does not necessarily follow that there was a Hebrew diminutive of ***keleb*** in Hebrew or ***kalbā*** in Aramaic (*pace* Gundry 1982, 315).

[10]The diminutive ***gûryāytā*** mentioned in the Talmudic reference to a woman playing with little cubs or little dogs (*b. Ket.* 61b) probably refers to the pieces of a board game: although some might take this word to mean literally little dogs, the context is of games, the next mentioned being 'nerdschir' which Ardesir Babekan is supposed to have invented (Krauss 1910-12, 3:113). The word ***gûryāytā*** refers to the young particularly of a dog or lion (Jastrow 1926, 227).

[11]A late 6th century Greek limestone relief shows a little dog begging from a seated male figure, who is depicted with a drinking cup in one hand and a piece of food (?) in the other (Richter 1930, 31-2, 75, and plate LI fig. 160). See also the illustration shown on a Corinthian mixing bowl of seated male figures reclining on sofas at table, while underneath the tables the dogs are tethered apart from each other to prevent the animals either from having a scrap or running around begging (Keller 1909-12, 1:123, fig.48).

[12]Perhaps a modern equivalent would be 'See a pin and pick it up...'.

4. The Demon 'Legion' and the Pigs.

One of the strangest episodes in the Gospels is the story of the demoniac with the legion of unclean spirits (Mark 5:1-20; Matt 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39). The ensuing destruction of the local swine is a disquieting element in the narrative. Is this incident, as it is depicted with the deaths of two thousand sentient animals, compatible with the more familiar Synoptic image of Jesus, who regards even the 'insignificant' sparrow as being worthy of God's attention (Luke 12:6)? How are we to understand the destruction of the pigs and the reference to 'Legion' (Mark 5:9)? We will address these questions later, but will look first at the passage as a whole. Since the Markan version is the fullest, we will concentrate on this, but we will also draw attention to any relevant differences in the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke.

Mark 5:1-20 – a Disjointed Narrative

The commentators appear to agree that just as Mark 4:37-41 shows Jesus' authority over the elemental forces of nature, Mark 5:1-20 shows his power over the demons, who are evil in 'multiple and fragmented form' (Girard 1990, 78). Most of the writers of the major commentaries, have recognised the disjointedness of the narrative and sought an explanation for this (Taylor 1952, 277; Pesch 1976-7, 1:282; Gnilka 1978-9, 1:200; Guelich 1989, 273; and Hooker 1991, 141-2). A discussion of the elements of the disjointedness is given later in the chapter. First we will look briefly at: (a) the text interpreted as an entity and (b) some suggestions of combinations in the story.

An unusual reading of the pericope as a whole is given by Girard (1990, 78) who considers that mimeticism is the unifying factor in the Gospels. The man's self-imposed exile and self lapidation is a mime of the punishment imposed by society, of hunting, stoning and killing (1990, 83). He also indicates the reversal of roles at the cliff top: the crowd (i.e. the demons) go over, the victim walks free (1990, 93); this calls to mind the attempt to kill Jesus at the cliff top (Luke 4:28-30). He argues for crowd mentality in the self-destruction of the pigs: this perhaps is the weak point of his argument; for, if as he says 'demons cannot exist in his (Jesus') presence', there was no need to send them into the pigs. Girard's interpretation does not take into account the disjointedness of the narrative, nor does it address issues such as the predominantly gentile setting.

Schweizer, on the other hand, suggests that 'an account of a healing by Jesus has been combined with a popular fairy tale about a "defrauded devil"... The devil thought the pigs would be an appropriate place for his mob of spirits.' (1971, 111-12). As the pig was an unclean animal to the Jews, the Jewish story-teller thought the animals were an ideal dwelling place for unclean spirits. Schweizer suggests the 'folksy' details of the pigs were added to an old story about Jesus casting out a demon. After describing the destruction of the pigs, Schweizer continues: 'vss. 10-13 are the proof of their being driven out such as is found in a similar Jewish story where the demon, as he is driven out, upsets a basin of water' - a possible reference to Josephus (*Ant.* 8.2.5 §48). Nineham also uses this quotation along with the similar episode in Philostratus (*Vita Apollonii* 4.20), citing them as instances of exorcised spirits' venting their spite in a manner visible to bystanders (1963, 151). However,

Eleazar *commanded* the demon to upset the water basin; similarly Apollonius *ordered* the demon to give a visible sign of exorcism - the demon offers to knock down the statue. Indeed, Bonner argues that the demons were compelled to give a visible proof of their exit (1970, 41). While Schweizer's theory of folk tale combined with exorcism has its attractions, it does not explain why the combination was made in the first instance.

The Possible 'Original' Kernel

Most of the explanations that are offered for the strangeness of the pericope tend to interpret the passage as a whole. It may be useful to try to determine what the original kernel could have been (but bearing in mind that such a 'kernel' is a possibility not an actuality). If Mark 1:23-28 (the exorcism in a *Jewish* setting at the synagogue at Capernaum) and Mark 5:1-20 (the exorcism in a *mainly gentile* setting in the Decapolis) are compared, and the relevant sections of the latter pericope are matched to those of the former, then it is possible to arrive at a kernel story in Mark 5, which falls into the following sections.

1:23	And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit.	5:2b	(Immediately) there met him from the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.
1:24	And he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.	5:7	and crying out with a loud voice, he said, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? ' I adjure you by God, do not torment me.'
1:25	But Jesus rebuked him saying, 'Be silent and come out of him!'	5:8	For he had said to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!'

1:26	And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.	5:13b	And the unclean spirits came out
1:27	And they were all amazed so that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.'	5:11,14	A great herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside. The herdsmen fled, and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened.
1:28	And at once his fame spread everywhere through -out all the surrounding region of Galilee.	5:20	And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and all men marvelled.

Although the above 'kernel' may be read as a cohesive whole, the Greek of 5:13b (καὶ ἐξελθόντα τὰ πνεύματα τὰ ἀκάθαρτα) is a participial phrase which would not stand on its own without a main verb. However, there would appear to be another element lacking in the *entire* pericope, namely a reference at the beginning of the passage to the man's being without clothing (cf. 5:19 ... seated, *clothed* and in his right mind). In view of this known 'missing link' in the text (as well as repetitions such as the two meetings in v2 and v6) it is at least possible that the present ending of 5:13 'and entered the swine' replaced an earlier 'and left the man'. Whatever the 'original' text or texts were, it would appear that material has been added, whether at a pre-Markan stage (Pesch 1976-7, 1:282; Guelich 1989, 273) or by Markan redaction (Gnilka 1978-9, 1:200). Indeed Derrett compares the pericope to an onion in layers (1980, 63). This 'layered' structure will be discussed more fully later. In discussing the Lukan parallel, Fitzmyer states: '...the basic miracle-story has in this

instance been enshrouded with elements of the fantastic and the grotesque.... The flamboyant and grotesque details of the story reveal the tendency that was beginning to be associated with basic miracle stories in the gospel tradition, a tendency that comes to full bloom in the apocryphal gospel tradition' (1981-5, 1:734). Although Fitzmyer offers no explanation as to why these details were incorporated, his implication is that they were added at a later stage (1981-5, 1:733).

One difference in Matthew's version is that there are two demoniacs (8:23-28). It is possible that Gundry is correct in suggesting that this 'doubling' is a compensation for the 'omission' of the man with an unclean spirit in the synagogue (Mark 1:23-28) as this 'compensatory doubling' may also account for the second blind man in 9:27-31; 20:29-34, since Matthew does not have the blind man at Beth-saida (Mark 8:22-26), (1982, 158). However, more cautiously, after listing nine possible reasons for the doubling of the demoniacs in Matthew, Davies and Allison (1988-97, 2:80) leave the question open and simply draw the reader's attention to this doubling elsewhere in Matthew (1988-97, 1:87).

The Word 'Legion' and the Legionary Forces

'My name is Legion' says the demon (Mark 5:9). Legion is not a name (Bauernfeind 1927, 26) nor is it a number in spite of Wellhausen's assertion that the unclean spirit did not wish to give his name and gave his number instead (1909, 39)[1]. The word 'legion' is actually a Latin loan word from the Roman military unit of 6000 men: the Greek form λεγιὼν , first encountered in Diodorus 26.5 in the first century BCE, was used neither in the Septuagint nor in Josephus, who used τάγμα instead (*J.W.*

2.19.7 §544; 3.5.5 §97). As a loan word 'legion' was employed later in Midrashic and Talmudic literature. Billerbeck suggests the word may also refer to 'a single legionary soldier' (1956, 2:9; so also Pesch 1976-7, 1:288). However, *Pesiq* 182a, the reference cited by Billerbeck, is attributed to R. Levi around 300 CE, and thus is unlikely to be relevant to a first century CE usage where the word is qualified by 'for we are many': *pace* Jeremias who argued this usage to resolve the tension between singular and plural pronouns (1958, 31 n.5)[2]. It may be argued that the man's statement 'for we are many' simply indicates a large number and has no military significance. However, as the literal precedes the figurative, the word must have been familiar in the military sense before its metaphorical use. Had a general figurative use of an 'army' of demons been intended in the Markan passage, there were several Greek words which could have been used: the most obvious of such words being στρατία (LXX 2 Chron 33:3 the 'hosts of heaven'). Apart from the parallel passage on the Gerasene demoniac in Luke 8:30, the only other usage of the word in the New Testament is in Matthew 26:53 'legions of angels'. Here, the use of 'legion' is figurative and indicates possible Matthean redaction from a time when the word has passed into common currency[3]. The reference to legion is not found in Matthew's version of the story. Luz suggests that Matthew may have omitted the reference for political reasons after 70 CE (1990-7, 2:32), thereby implying that he also assumes that the choice of the word 'legion' in Mark 5:9 points directly to the Roman forces.

There were no legionary forces stationed in Galilee or Judaea during the first half of the first century CE. A point upon which the commentators are silent, although they mention the fact that a legion consisted of 6000 men in the time of Augustus.

Under Pompey, Roman legions first appeared in Judaea in 65 BCE but by the death of Archelaus in 6 CE there were no Roman legions remaining in the country. The legion which had been left in Jerusalem in 37 BCE (Josephus *Ant.* 15.3.7 §72) had gone by the death of Archelaus (Smallwood 1976, 60-1, 114 n.36). Until the first Jewish revolt of 66-73 CE, the military forces in Galilee and Judaea were auxiliary units which were composed of five cohorts (infantry) the *Cohortes I-V Sebastenorum* and one *ala* (cavalry) the *Ala Sebastenorum*. Each cohort or ala usually consisted of 500 or 1000 men and was named after the ethnic group from which the men had been recruited (Schürer-Vermes-Millar 1973-87, 1:362). These auxiliary forces consisted of approximately 3000 soldiers who were recruited mainly from Sebaste and Caesarea (Josephus *Ant.* 19.9.1 §356-66; 20.6.1 §121; 20.8.7 §176; *J.W.* 2.12.5 §236; 3.4.1 §66). Speidel (1982/3, 235-37) argues against Schürer-Vermes-Millar that the Italian cohort mentioned in Acts 10:1 was a *Roman* cohort which added local recruits as necessary: this view is given cautious acceptance by Mor (1986, 578). However, Speidel has used epigraphic evidence from a later date in support of his claim[4]. Even if Speidel's argument were proven, the incident in Acts occurred after the death of Jesus. Moreover, a cohort is not a legion.

As we conceded earlier, in the chapter on the Eagles, there was likely to have been folk memory of the legions in Jerusalem under Varus (Josephus *Ant.* 17.11.1 §299) and also of his crucifixion of two thousand rebels (Josephus *J.W* . 2.5.2 §75). Nevertheless, this happened in 4 BCE and the legion had gone by 6 CE. It may also be argued that in the first half of the first century CE, there were four legions stationed in nearby Syria (Goodman, 1997, 84). Indeed, during this period, there

were two separate incidents in which a legate of Syria was ordered into Judaea with legionary troops. The first of these was in 37 CE when Vitellius was told to march on Aretas at Petra (Josephus *Ant.* 18.5.3 §120-22). However, when Vitellius reached Ptolemais in Phoenicia he was met by a deputation of Jews who requested that he did not march through their land with iconic standards. Each unit had a standard and many of these standards bore the image of the emperor: as the emperor was regarded as divine, these standards were tantamount to graven images in Jewish eyes (Exod 20:4). Vitellius agreed to reroute his men along the Great Plain to avoid Jewish territory as much as possible. The second situation arose in 40 CE, when Gaius (Caligula) proposed setting up his statue in Jerusalem in the Temple (Josephus *Ant.* 18.8.2 §261-62). This proposal met with such a reaction from the Jews that Gaius ordered Petronius, Legate of Syria, to take two legions and march on Jerusalem. However, Petronius left the legions at Ptolemais in Phoenicia, while he and his staff went on to Tiberias. The issue was resolved without bloodshed due to Petronius' delaying tactics (Gaius died in the interim). Thus even during this time of tension, the legions did not enter Galilee or Judaea. Both of these incidents were after the death of Jesus and both showed a sympathetic attitude on the part of the respective Roman legates of Syria to Jewish religious sensitivities [5].

It was the outbreak of the First Jewish War that occasioned the employment of legionary forces in the country. In 67 CE Vespasian mustered three legions, the *Legio X Fretensis*, *Legio V Macedonia* and *Legio XV Apollinaris*, at Ptolemais. The following year, Vespasian marched on Gadara, where the rich and powerful surrendered to the Romans. The insurgents from the city fled first to Bethennabris,

then afterwards to the Jordan, which was swollen by the rains and unfordable. Though the insurgents fought bravely, they were no match for the Romans who killed 15,000, took 2,000 prisoner and *forced others to jump into the Jordan*, where they drowned and were eventually washed up on the shores of the Dead Sea (Josephus *J.W.* 4.7.5 §435). It may be that this incident influenced the choice of 'Gadarene' in the Matthean account as well as Gadara's relative proximity to the Sea of Galilee in comparison with Gerasa.

Was there a reference to a particular Roman legion couched in the demon's answer? The device on the standard of *Legio X Fretensis* was the boar. As noted above, this legion took part in the First Jewish War and later was left to garrison the ruins of Jerusalem after the fall of the city (Smallwood, 1976, 331). Tile fragments found in Jerusalem show the symbols of the wild boar[6] and a galley with the legend LEG.X.F duly depicted (Michon 1900, 101-103 and *planche* 1). Later the emblem of the boar was to appear on the coinage of the city under its new name of Aelia Capitolina. The reference to 'legion' in Mark 5:9 may have had a general meaning only, but if any particular legion was intended in the demon's answer, then the Tenth *Legio Fretensis* is the most likely candidate. As Latin was used primarily by the Romans for offical purposes in Judaea and Galilee (Fitzmyer 1970, 505, 531) and as legions *per se* were neither employed nor garrisoned in Judaea or Galilee (in the first century CE) until the First Jewish Revolt, it would appear that the reference to 'legion' in Mark 5:9 is a later addition to the story. This also fits in with the generally accepted dating of Mark's Gospel[7].

The Pericope as Allegory

That 'legion' refers to the Roman presence in the country is recognised by Theissen who points out that just as the demons do not want to leave the country neither do the Romans (1983, 255). The demons ask permission to enter the pigs because they wish to remain in the country. In discussing the parallel passage in Luke 8:26-39, which introduces the element of the abyss (and which is not found in Mark or Matthew), LaHurd (1990, 157) points out that χώρα means 'dry land' as well as 'country', which indicates an ironic foreshadowing of the demons' fate: this is also implicit in Luke's word play in 8:31 ἵνα μὴ ἐπιτάξῃ αὐτοῖς εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον ἀπελθεῖν : ἄβυσσος is both sea (LXX Isa 63:13) and also a place of punishment (Rev 9:1; 20:1). Though the use of θάλασσα in Mark appears more neutral, there is an ambivalent attitude to the sea which is a source of life (Gen 1:20-22) yet it is also a place to be feared (Mark 4:37-38; Rev 21:1). Finally, it is a region over which God has control (Exod 14:21) and Jesus also has power (Mark 4:39).

One suggestion of the demons/pigs destruction in the sea is that of an Exodus typology where the demons represent the soldiers of Pharaoh drowned in the Red Sea after the crossing of the Israelites (Exod 14:27-28). According to Derrett this was first put forward by Joanna Southcott in the seventeenth century (1979a, 16 n.22). In this context, the stilling of the storm (Mark 4:39) and the walking on water (Mark 6:48) have parallels with the safe crossing of the Israelites (Exod 14:29). Building on this Old Testament typology, Chapman sees the pericope as an allegory of Roman occupation which explains to the first century reader why Israel is still occupied after the coming of the Messiah: the demoniac is Israel, the pigs are the unbelieving who,

along with the pagans are doomed. 'Mark reasoning backward, concluded it was by Jesus' permission that the Romans remained in the land.' (1993, 121-22). The pigs' destruction in the sea was to indicate what would happen to Romans and unbelievers alike by recalling the fate of Pharaoh's army. An allegorical interpretation does appear to be possible, if it is a later addition as Chapman suggests. Moreover, as Mark's Gospel, like the Pauline writings, tends to be pro-gentile, this interpretation is an unusual instance of polemic in Mark (cf. Mark12:17): though this type of polemic was not unknown elsewhere (cf. *As. Mos.* 10:7). Unfortunately, Chapman's interpretation is based on an assumption that the man is Jewish, whereas he may well have been gentile. Moreover, the interpretation takes no account of the tombs and makes no mention of the difficulties connected with the locality, or the disjointedness of the narrative. Nevertheless, some aspects of Chapman's allegorical explanation ring true, notably the linking of the 'legion' to the Romans, and the future 'cleansing' of the land by the expulsion of the pigs.

What then was the function of the pigs in the story? Ådna argues that the pigs as 'the symbol par excellence of paganism' were added at a later stage, as was the detail of the sea as the 'appropriate chaos abode of the demons' (1999, 297). However, in the kernel account, the pigs provide the herdsmen as witnesses to the exorcism, a point upon which Jeremias touched briefly (1958, 31 n.5): 'the herd of swine was only mentioned because the swineherds witnessed the expulsion of the demon.' However, the pigs were probably included also as a pointer to the exorcism's taking place in *predominantly* gentile country. (As the population of the towns was mixed, it is at times an oversimplification to speak without qualification of gentile or Jewish

territory). The later details of the demons' entering the pigs and their total destruction were added as a wish fulfilment of the land's being cleared of the unclean presence of the Romans. Yet, why did the Jews regard the pigs as being unclean?

The Pig and Its Prohibition

The main species of the wild pig (*Sus scrofa*) was to be found throughout Europe, the Middle East and Asia (Cansdale 1970, 96). Pigs had first been domesticated in the Middle East in 6,500 BCE (Gautier 1990, 138). Since herds of pigs were kept in other Middle Eastern countries, such as Egypt and Mesopotamia, why were the animals regarded as unclean by the Jews? The law forbade the eating of pork (Lev 11:7): the rabbis forbade the raising of the animals (*m. B. Qam.* 7.7). Various reasons have been put forward for the ban including the ingenious suggestion of Harris that it was because raising pigs became too costly in ecological terms (1977, 197; 1996, 142). Pigs cannot digest cellulose and therefore do not browse or graze like goats or cattle, but forage in woodland for roots and tubers, acorns and beechmast. Harris argues that, as the forests were being cut down, pigs were being fed on grain. However, as pigs are omnivorous, extremely adaptable animals and were found throughout Galilee and Judaea (Cansdale 1970, 96; Bodenheimer 1935, 113; Tristram 1884, 7:3) the ecological explanation is not entirely convincing. Elsewhere, pigs were raised on miller's waste stuff (Plautus *Captivi* 4.2.28 §808).

The suggestion of de Vaux that the prohibition was based on a determination of the Israelites to set themselves apart from those who used the pig in sacrifice, at first seems nearer the mark (1956, 262-63). However, this argument also has its

shortcomings as other animals were also used in pagan sacrifices. Indeed the Roman *suovetaurilia* (sacrifice of pig, sheep and bull)[8] was used on special occasions such as the dedication of the new temple on the Capitol (Tacitus *Historia* 4.53). Cansdale suggested that the ban on eating pork was linked to the pig's being a host of the tapeworm which causes trichinosis, a disease potentially fatal to people (1970, 99). However, it is debatable whether such medical knowledge was available to the Israelites.

Another suggestion for the prohibition was that of Douglas who argued that anything which did not fit into a classification system of locomotion according to element (i.e. earth, air or water) was unclean: 'Anything which has not fins and scales is unclean... Four-footed creatures which fly are unclean. Any creature which goes on all fours like a quadruped is unclean.' (1975, 55-56). Although this suggestion is given broad support by Bryan, he rightly points out that this analysis does not account for the disqualification of the pig (or camel, hare or rock hyrax), (1995, 157). Douglas argues that the Israelites, like other pastoralists did not relish wild game (but cf. Deuteronomy 14:5, which we discussed in the chapter on wild animals). Strangely neither Douglas nor Bryan take into account that Esau was a hunter of game (Gen 27:3-4), so also was Nimrod (Gen 10:9). It may be that there is no one explanation for all the Levitical divisions of clean and unclean because there were different reasons why various species of animal were so regarded. Possibly, a combination of the scavenging habits of the pig among waste and refuse, plus its omnivorous ability to digest 'snakes, mice and young birds' (Cansdale 1970, 97), including the consuming of their blood (Gen 9:4), rendered it 'unclean' in the eyes of the Israelites.

As we have seen, the similar eating habits of the dog may have led to its lack of favour among the Jews (n.b. dogs and pigs are often mentioned together [*m. Kil.* 8.6; *m. B. Qam.* 7.7; *m. Bek.* 4.4]). Whatever the rationale which lay behind the prohibition on eating pork, the ban on raising pigs was probably not strictly kept by every Jew. Citing the Mishnaic tract 'the carcass of a pig as well as that of a camel can be sold to a non-Jew' (*m.* *ʿUq* 3.3), Safrai avers 'that pigs after all were raised by Jews' (1994, 172). The reference to pig keeping in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:15-16) would suggest that the embargo on raising pigs was not always scrupulously observed.

The Pigs in the Story

It has been suggested by Derrett that the pigs were intended for sacrifice as the pig was a favourite sacrificial animal among gentiles (1980, 69). That the pig was used extensively in sacrifice is correct[9]. However, even on Roman farms most domestic pigs 'would have been despatched, whether as full grown animals or as sucking pigs to the pork butchers[10] in the nearest towns' (Toynbee 1973, 132). It seems more likely that the animals were raised mainly for food[11] and some animals would then be sold for sacrificial purposes. Derrett avers that Jesus' want of care for the pigs is because the animals were affected by bestiality: but there is nothing in the text to suggest this. Even the link made by some commentators to Isaiah 65:4, 'who sit in tombs and spend the night in secret places, who eat swine's flesh', does not carry a connotation of bestiality. In any case, the suggested link to Isaiah is somewhat tenuous: the passage in Isaiah refers to Israelites, who profess faith in the God of Moses, but who not only sit in tombs in secret (a reference to necromancy) but also

eat the forbidden flesh of swine. The man, on the other hand, lived openly among the tombs and advertised his presence by shouting: indeed his behaviour fits the Talmudic description of madness: 'What is the definition of an idiot? It is one who goes out alone at night, who sleeps in a graveyard, who rips his clothes (*b. Ḥag.* 3.1b). Moreover, although there were pigs in the vicinity, there is no mention of what the man ate or even if he was Jew or gentile. (If the man was Jewish then the mention of tombs suggests ritual impurity: if he was gentile then the implication is that he was dead to his own society.) A picture of a Roman cemetery lying outside the city walls and which is 'constantly busy and filled with mourners and worshippers' is given by Johnson (1998, 64): but the herdsmen have to run to the town to tell the people what has happened. It is the herdsmen who are the witnesses of the exorcism, therefore it is unlikely that the area of the tombs in the story are as busy as Johnson suggests. However, the reference to the fact that food was brought to the necropolis on the birthdays of the departed, may explain how the man managed to survive as an outcast among the tombs.

Derrett (1980, 69) seems to have stretched a number of points in his discussion: 'all animals affected by bestiality must be stoned (Lev 20:15-16), and precipitation is as good as stoning.... All objects suspected of having figured in idol-worship must be thrown into the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee will do almost as well.' Elsewhere, Derrett (1979a, 12) argues that, in any case, Jesus as Messiah had the right to dispose of up to two thousand animals. By using the Midrashic *'al tiqrēy* method in Psalm 8:7(8) he reads the word 'oxen' as 'two thousand'[12]. However, although this argument is certainly ingenious, would those reading or hearing the passage in Mark make

such a link with Psalm 8? Is it not more likely that the number two thousand was a general round number, such as the four and five thousand in the feeding stories (cf. Jeremias and the link with τέλος n.2)? The amount at any rate seems an exaggeration: pigs by nature live in family groups in the wild (Cansdale 1970, 97; Wilson 1975, 480). The ideal size of herd was a hundred to one hundred and fifty, but some farmers kept double this amount (Varro *De Re Rustica* 2.4.19-22).

Drawing parallels with the cleansing of the Temple (Mark 11:15-17; Matt 21:12-16; Luke 19:45-48) Johnson (1998, 73) argues that the driving of the pigs into the sea was a sign that pagan sacrifice would be superseded just as the Temple system would be overthrown. The cleansing of the Temple by Jesus was a protest against the traders who had profaned the Temple precincts and turned 'the house of prayer' into 'a den of thieves'. Johnson has based his argument on the fact that Romans sacrificed pigs at tombs and that this system is also to be superseded: in effect he is right, the pagan sacrificial system would be set aside, but this was not the main point of the story. There is no mention of sacrifice in the exorcism narrative which describes animals feeding at the hillside, not their being sold for sacrifice. The main point of the story is the healing, with its cleansing of the man of unclean spirits: the cleansing of the land of its unclean Roman military presence is a later development. It may be argued, why then should it be gentile rather than Jewish territory which is involved? As was pointed out earlier, the area was predominantly, not exclusively, gentile. Moreover, the word 'Legion' argues for a military presence not a sacrificial system. Also as was noted earlier, the destruction of the pigs and the 'Legion' are likely to have been later details of the story.

Would two thousand pigs or a large herd even, behave in the manner described? Weiss (1903, 188-9) suggested that the herd had been terrified into rushing down the slope, because the man had thrown himself at the pigs, and shouted and raved in a paroxysm as the demons left him. This 'rational' explanation was adopted by several of the commentators, such as Taylor (1952, 282-3). According to the story, however, as the man was in the habit of rushing around the hillside and shouting and cutting himself, the pigs would be well used to his behaviour: therefore, they would be unlikely to be frightened by any paroxysm of the man's during his healing. Moreover, according to Professor C. Whittemore, University of Edinburgh[13], though pigs are 'capable of moving uni-directionally by communal desire', it is with a definite purpose moving from A-B: under these circumstances they trot. If a herd of pigs are frightened, they give barking cries of alarm and scamper in all directions: under these circumstances, it may be possible for a few animals to fall from a cliff by accident but not for an entire herd. Nor would an entire herd rush down a steep bank into water - in any case pigs are buoyant and swim well. Could they be driven? An attempt to drive pigs is more likely to result in the nearest animals' turning to face the herdsman to find out what is happening! (In contrast with cattle which can be stampeded into a self-continuing moving mass). Thus, the account of the pigs' destruction lacks ethological probability.

It would appear that originally the pigs served the double purpose of (a) acting as a pointer to predominantly gentile territory, and (b) providing the herdsmen as witnesses to the exorcism. The sending of the demons into the pigs and their subsequent drowning is symbolic wish fulfilment, which is likely to have been added

at the same time as the reference to 'Legion' and consequently is due to redaction. One difference in Matthew's version at this point (8:32), is that Jesus commands the demon to enter the pigs, rather than passively allowing them to do so, as in the versions of Mark and Luke. While it may be correct to say that, here, Matthew wished to emphasize the dominance of Jesus (Luz 1990-97, 2:33; Gundry 1982, 160; Davies and Allison 1988-97, 2:82), the end result was the same in all versions, namely the destruction of the pigs. It may be argued that as all three Synoptic Gospels link the pericope with the episode of the calming of the storm, this would indicate that the setting of the exorcism by the lake was an early part of the tradition: this is certainly possible. However, it is also possible that the story was moved to a lake-side setting in order to incorporate the drowning episode. Gnilka (1978-9, 1:201) in fact argued the lakeside setting was due to redaction; but he did not make the link with the lateness of the addition of 'Legion', which would have strengthened his suggestion that the sea was needed for the destruction of the pigs. The addition of the lakeside setting also gives force to Mark's portrayal of the lake as a frame for the Moses/Jesus typology of the feedings in the wilderness and that of the crossing of the Red Sea/Sea of Galilee.

The Location

The vexed question of locality and the variant readings of Gerasenes, Gadarenes and Gergesenes, in all three versions, arose because of the difficulties with the lakeside setting[14]. Since Gerasa (modern Jerash) is thirty-five miles south-east of the Lake, Fitzmyer (1981-5, 1:736) dryly observes: 'The stampede of the pigs from Gerasa to the Lake would have made them the most energetic herd in history!'. However, if it is

accepted that the drowning and the lakeside setting are due to later redaction (Guelich 1989, 283), then the location of Gerasa (or strictly speaking 'the land of the Gerasenes') presents no problem. The reading of 'Gadarenes' in the best manuscripts in Matthew, seems to be an attempt to move the location to a more credible proximity to the lake (Luz 1990-7, 2:31-32). This reading, as noted earlier, was possibly influenced by the incident of the Gadarene insurgents (Josephus *J.W.* 4.7.5. 5 §435). However, although the town of Gadara (modern Umm Qeis) is situated on an 'almost isolated spur of land with steep slopes on all sides but the east' (Harding 1974, 56) it is still five miles from the lake, and the tombs were just outside the town. The reading of Gergesenes was attributed to Origen by Baarda (1969, 186) but Fitzmyer (1981-5, 1:736-737) disputes this, on the grounds that some manuscripts with this reading predate Origen. Origen certainly adopted this reading because of the steep banks in the vicinity of the minor lakeside town (modern Kersa), (*Comm. in Ioan.* 6.41.5-7 [24.78-9]).

Gentile Mission?

What of the original exorcism? The man, living among tombs and in the vicinity of pigs (on both counts, ritually unclean himself), may also have been a gentile. Indeed, Wefald (1995, 9-10) posits the view that the visit to the Decapolis was part of a deliberate gentile mission by Jesus. However, as we saw in the chapter containing the episode of the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30; Matt 15:21-28), there is little evidence of the evangelists envisaging such a mission by Jesus. Instead, Mark may have envisaged Jesus as visiting Jewish people in areas where the population was a mixture of the gentile and the Jewish. Certainly, the former demoniac may have

been gentile and he was living in an area which was mainly gentile. Moreover, as we saw also in the Syrophoenician episode, Mark depicted Jesus as being prepared on occasion to help gentile people. That this section of story containing the man's request and Jesus' subsequent reply is not found in Matthew, may be due to Matthew's view of a gentile mission being post-Easter only (*pace* Gundry 1982, 161). Of the same section in Luke, Fitzmyer observes: 'He [Jesus] sends him on a missionary errand that is not yet of Christian discipleship, since the time for gentile disciples has not yet come in the Lucan story' (1981-5, 1:740).

Uncleanness

Although it may be argued that pigs were regarded as unclean animals by the Jews, Jesus is not portrayed as having been unduly concerned with ritual uncleanness. In Mark 1:41 he cures, by touch, the leper who according to Levitical law (Lev 13:8; 45-46) was a social outcast, literally an untouchable. Elsewhere, Jesus is shown as healing people without the need to touch them physically, (*in absentia*, even), for example the centurion's servant (Matt 8:5,6,13; Luke 7:2,10) and the Syrophoenician woman's daughter (Mark 7:29-30; Matt 15:22). The story of the Good Samaritan, although it appears only in Luke 10:30-35, may also be argued as an indicator of how Jesus was viewed as having a disregard of ritual uncleanness. The priest and the Levite did not want to incur 'corpse uncleanness' (Num 19:11) while the Samaritan (who also would normally keep the Pentateuchal law) did not let this issue prevent him from going to help the man. (Some commentators regard this parable as a Lukan creation [Goulder 1989, 2:490-91]. However, Fitzmyer [1981-5, 2:883] and Marshall [1978, 446] see it as coming from the L special material in the tradition). Certainly in

the raising of Jairus' daughter Jesus is depicted as risking the incurring of 'corpse uncleanness' (Mark 5: 35-41; Luke 8:49-54; Matt 9:23-25). Moreover, the episode of the ritual washing of hands (Mark 7:2-5; Matt 15:20) is explicitly concerned with ritual uncleanness and, here, Jesus is portrayed as resolutely setting his face against any insistence on this custom (*m. Yad.* 1.1). The demoniac himself is ritually unclean on two counts, as not only is he living among the pigs (Lev 11:7-8), but also among tombs (Num 19:16).

Conclusion

The central point of the story is the healing. The man, previously insane, isolated from the society of his fellow human beings and 'dead to the world', is now made whole, sane, able to rejoin human company, to look out beyond himself and to act as Jesus' messenger in the mixed gentile/Jewish territory. This, then, is likely to have been the original story as set out in the suggested 'kernel' (see below). The story as it now stands in Mark shows evidence of 'layering': for example, the lack of any mention of the man's being naked at the beginning of the narrative (cf. 5:15) and also the two meetings (5:2, 6). In comparing this exorcism in mainly gentile territory with that carried out in the synagogue (1:23-28), it is possible to arrive at a putative 'original' kernel (with the caveat that it is a suggestion only). In this kernel the pigs were originally simply an indication that the story took place in mainly gentile territory and the herdsmen acted as witnesses to the healing

The mention of 'Legion' linked to the destruction of the pigs is likely to have been later redaction (*pace* Johnson 1998, 73). 'Legion' is an allusion to the Romans

(Theissen 1983, 255). However, there were no legions stationed in Judaea or Galilee during the first half of the first century CE, when the two provinces were served by auxiliary units drawn from areas like Sebaste. Even allowing for folk memory of the legion under Varus around 4BCE in Jerusalem, the most likely time for this allusion to have been added to the story was during the First Jewish War. Whether this addition was Markan or pre-Markan we left open.

That Jesus has been depicted as apparently allowing the destruction of two thousand sentient creatures has been discussed most fully by Plummer (1905, 228-29). However, if the drowning is due to (pre-) Markan redaction linked to the late addition of 'Legion', then there was no destruction of the animals, either by passive acceptance (Guelich 1989, 283) or the permitting of a lesser evil (Bauckham 1998a, 48). Indeed, no herd of pigs would charge down a slope *en masse*, either of their own volition or by stampeding. Moreover, the destruction of the pigs was unnecessary as a means of exorcism since nowhere else is the Synoptic Jesus shown as sending demons/unclean spirits into any other living being (Mark 1:23-26; Luke 4:33-35; Matt 17:18; passim).

Mark (and the other Evangelists) viewed Jesus, as being like any first century Jew, in that he would regard the man as being of more value than the animals (Matt 12:12). Nevertheless, the Synoptic Jesus was profoundly aware of God's care for *all* creation, cf. Luke 12:24 and God's feeding of the ravens, which were also unclean creatures in Jewish eyes (Lev 11:15). For Jesus, as he is represented in the Synoptic tradition, ritual uncleanness was, at most, of negligible importance. Instead, as we

have seen, the story of the pigs' destruction was added at a later date to the original exorcism account. To the Evangelists, the pigs are merely *symbolic* (unclean animals as a suitable abode for unclean spirits) in a wish fulfilment story of the Romans' being driven out of the country: but to later readers seeking a *literal* truth, this apocryphal aspect of the story is not consistent with the familiar image of the Synoptic Jesus, who brought, not death, but life.

Endnotes: The Demon 'Legion' and the Pigs

[1]Bonner (1970,41) says demons were compelled to give their name or nature.

[2]Jeremias (1958, 31 n.5) indicates that in vs.2,7-10a and 15, the demon is spoken of in the singular, whereas the plural occurs only in vs.10b., 12-13: he suggests that the latter group is an insertion. Following Strack-Billerbeck (1956, 2:9), he argues that as the Aramaic word *ligyônā* can mean either 'soldier' or 'legion', the translator opted for the latter which gave rise to the idea that the demoniac was possessed by a great number of demons. In effect Jeremias maintains that in v9 the demon replies that his name is soldier, since there is a whole army of demons in the world (but only one in the man). Jeremias also makes the point of the approximation in number between the two thousand pigs and the two thousand and forty eight men in the military unit of the τέλος.

[3]Senior (1975, 120;141-2) and Stanton (1992, 333) agree that Matthew 26:47-56 is Matthean redaction.

[4]The inscription on a gravestone (found at Carnumtum in Austria) 'which is generally agreed to be dated AD 69/70' (Speidel 1982/3, 235-6, 235 n.9).

[5]This sympathetic attitude was in marked contrast to the behaviour of Pilate, when in 26CE he smuggled units with iconic standards into the Antonia under cover of darkness. Later he had to capitulate and replace the units with others whose standards did not bear the emperor's image (Smallwood 1976,161-2).

[6]Michon (1900, 102-3) rebuts the idea of M.de Saulcy (*Revue archéologique* t.XX 251-260) that the sign of the boar was 'une insulte jetée à la face de la nation juive' as the Romans had other animals such as the bull and the goat on their standards. In fact through the *sus alba* - the Great White Sow - of Virgil's *Aeneid* 8.44-49, pigs appeared regularly in Roman art (Toynbee 1973, 131).

The 20th Legion *Valeria Victrix* also had a boar as its emblem, but this legion did not serve in Syria or Judaea during the first century, but served instead in the Rhineland and Britain (Webster 1985, 59 n.2; Parker 1958, 271).

[7]The date of Mark's Gospel is now generally regarded as being after Peter's death in the Neronian persecution of 64/65, according to Irenaeus (*Adv.Haer.* 3.1.1.) against Clement (*Hypotyposeis* 6): 'with few exceptions contemporary scholarship has opted for the later dating' (Guelich 1989, xxxi). The question which concerns current scholarship as to whether the Gospel was written before or after the Fall of Jerusalem does not affect my interpretation of Mark 5:9 as the 10th Legion *Fretensis* had been brought into Judaea in 67 CE.

[8]Illustrations of sculpted reliefs of the three animals being led to the *suovetaurilia* can be found in: (Keller 1909, 1: 402, fig.140; Toynbee 1973, illus.57 [the Louvre, Paris]; Webster 1985 pl.II facing p.24 [Trajan's Column, Rome]). A full listing of these reliefs can be found in Toynbee, p.134.

[9]For an extensive discussion of pig sacrifice in the Roman World see Johnson (1998, 64-69).

[10]In Apicius' cookery book, the recipes for pork covered 3 pages as opposed to a mere 10 lines for beef and veal combined (cited in White 1970, 277).

[11]The city of Gerasa had a Roman garrison in the second half of the first century (Browning 1982, 36).

[12]Derrett (1970 224 n.5) 'Alef and Ayin are interchangeable and may be removed or added according to the *'al–tik^{e}rey* technique.' (Derrett has used two methods of transliteration, one as quoted in this footnote, the other as reproduced in my text from his article (1979a, 12.)

[13]In the University of Edinburgh's Institute of Ecology and Resource Management, Professor Colin Whittemore is the acknowledged expert on pigs: he has herded the animals in semi-wild conditions. He makes the point that a herd of pigs would normally consist of only about one hundred animals as pigs are wilful unlike the more biddable sheep.

In a telephone call he very kindly gave the information I have used, and also permission to quote him 'anecdotally'.

[14]See Marshall (1978, 336) for a table clearly setting out the textual variants in important witnesses of the three readings in each gospel.

5. Erring Goats and Errant Sheep.

A flock of sheep grazing on a hillside is one of the most timeless images of peace and tranquillity. It was an image which throughout Hebrew Scripture symbolised the people of God under the care of God as shepherd (Ps 23; Isa 40:11; Ezek 34). In the New Testament the symbolism of sheep as people is continued (1 Pet 2:25): but, in the Gospel of John (10:11), it is Jesus who is the shepherd[1]. The metaphor of sheep as people is found in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matt 9:36 passim; Mark 6:34; Luke 12:32). Yet in the four accounts of the cleansing of the temple, the sacrificial sheep and oxen are mentioned only in the Fourth Gospel (John 2:15). The concept of sacrifice is discussed in Excursus One. In this chapter, we will be looking at the 'division of the sheep and the goats' (Matt 25:32-33) which is the only reference to goats in the Synoptic Gospels. Does this illustration reflect any negative attitude to goats in reality? We will also be discussing the 'parable of the lost sheep' (Matt 18:12-13; Luke 15:4-6) in this chapter. Given that the sheep was often used as a metaphor for people, what does this parable indicate of attitudes to living animals and their care? First, however, it may be useful to look at the importance of sheep and goats and their place in the lives of the Jewish people.

The Domestication of Sheep and Goats

According to Safrai (1994, 165-169) there were three kinds of sheep grazing, which in turn reflected three different types of agricultural and economic society. In the Negev and the Judaean desert, nomadic herdsmen had their animals grazing in the wilderness all year round: this must have been a continuation of the practice of the

early nomads who, like Abraham had brought herds from Mesopotamia. The domestication of sheep had begun in Iraq over nine thousand years ago (Gautier 1990, 4,133). Remains dating back to the same era were also found at Jericho (Clutton-Brock 1987, 56). In Judaea, an area well known for its sheep and wool industry (Applebaum 1976, 655; Safrai 1994, 171), there was transhumance of the animals to summer pasture in the wilderness, until the rainy season began, when they returned to the settlement. In Galilee, however, there was limited grazing and the fewer animals, here, were kept near the settlement itself. Farming in Galilee tended to be of the intensive agricultural kind, in contrast to the practice in Judaea where farming was a mixture of the pastoral and agricultural. Bodenheimer (1935, 123) observes that in the most difficult period (autumn and early winter) the animals subsist mainly on the fat stored in their bodies particularly in the tails. Although there was a breed of sheep, in the northern hills, not unlike the merino (*Ovis aries*) the most prevalent breed was the Awasi fat-tailed sheep (*Ovis laticaudata*) which was known to the early Israelites (1 Sam 9:24)[2], and probably originated in the Syrian desert (Tristram 1880, 143).

The word πρόβατον originally covered both sheep and goats which precede (προβαίνει) the larger cattle in primitive mixed herds. Although sheep and goats were (and still are) herded together, by New Testament times the term came to be applied rather more to sheep, while other words for goats were used when it was necessary to differentiate between the two species (Lincoln 1996, 323)[3]. Although the goat was certainly domesticated by 7000 BCE in Iran (Gautier 1990, 4, 129), remains found at Jericho belong to the same era (Clutton-Brock 1987, 60).

Illustrations of one of the native species, the black mamber goat (*Capra mambrica*) with its long hair and distinctive drooping ears, are known from 2000 BCE (Cansdale 1970, 44-45; Bodenheimer 1935, 124). The other main type of goat (with short hair and horizontal ears) was known in the area from the third millenium BCE: this second type could be piebald or speckled with white, black or brown (Lincoln 1996, 331). Although sheep and goats are herded together, they differ in some respects as sheep graze mainly on herbage, while goats browse on shrubs and the lower branches of small trees: this habit of browsing is notoriously destructive and, in many areas, has contributed to deforestation (Lancaster 1991, 130).

The sheep provided milk as well as wool for the household's clothing (*m. Ḥul.* 11.1,2). The goat was an even more important provider of milk, while its coarse hair was useful only for making tents and poor quality cloth: 'a goat for its milk and a ewe for its fleece' (*b. Šabb.* 19b). Cow's milk does not seem to have been used to any great extent anywhere in Mediterranean countries in antiquity (Frayn 1979, 41; Isager and Skydsgaard 1992, 90-91; Hamel 1990, 24). Although many people probably had one or two sheep only, there were also large herds which could number as many as three hundred animals under the care of one shepherd (*t. B. Qam.* 620). Among the modern Bedouin the range is from 20-200 (Dalman 1939, 6:246). Although there were farmers who grazed their own sheep (*m. Šeb.* 3.4) it was customary for a number of owners to hand over their sheep to a professional shepherd. 'None may buy wool or milk [or kids] from a herdsman or wood and fruit from them that watch over fruit trees' (*m. B. Qam.* 10.9). Therefore the guardians were not always the owners. The hired shepherds were familiar with areas for

grazing, which was particularly important during the early days of autumn when pasturage was poor and the winter rains had not yet arrived (Cansdale 1970, 50). Thus the shepherd in the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-6) may have been a moderately wealthy owner (Fitzmyer 1981-5, 2:1076) but he could have been a hired herdsman with a collection of animals from several local farmers. We will return to this point later.

Predators and Other Problems for the Shepherd

The shepherd had to be vigilant at night against predators as well as during the day (Luke 2:8). The wolf (*Canis lupus*) of John 10:12 hunted singly, and in pairs after sunset, while the jackal (*Canis aureus*) hunted at night in packs. 'A single wolf is far more destructive than a whole pack of jackals, who always betray their presence, and who can only carry off any silly straggler' (Tristram 1880, 154). Although the wolf is the only predator of flocks mentioned in the Gospels or Acts (cf. 1 Enoch 89:55), there were other carnivorous animals which could be a danger. According to the Mishnah: the shepherd was held accountable if one wolf attacked his flock, but not if two wolves came; nor was he accountable if the flock was attacked by a lion, bear, leopard, panther or serpent (*m. B. Meṣ.* 7.9).

The lion (*Felis leo*) was possibly rare even in New Testament times (Cansdale 1970, 110). However, there were certainly instances of the lion preying on Israelite flocks (1 Sam 17:34; Amos 3:12). By contrast, in the nineteenth century C.E. the more elusive leopard (*Felis leopardus*) was still numerous and constituted a threat to herdsmen (Tristram 1880, 112). If the leopard (synonymous with the panther) preyed

habitually on sheep or cattle, it was because the wild game in the area had gone (Cansdale 1970, 111-2). Like the lion, the Syrian bear (*Ursus syriacus*) was known as a predator on Israelite flocks (1 Sam 17:34) and though scarce was still to be found in Tristram's Palestine (Tristram 1880, 48). The bear probably attempted to take the occasional lamb, when the predator was tempted by hunger down to lower ground in late winter or early spring (Cansdale 1970, 118). Of the many species of snakes in Judaea and Galilee most are harmless to people, but the Levant viper (*Vipera palestina*) is the commonest poisonous snake throughout the country and the only such snake in Galilee (Cansdale 1970, 209; Lulav 1978, 438). Although there is no mention anywhere in Scripture of a snake actually eating a lamb or kid, any snake might easily bite if disturbed (Amos 5:19; Eccl 10:8).

Wild animals were not the only predators: thieves and brigands would also steal from the flock if they had the opportunity (*m. B.Qam.* 6.1). In spite of the risks run by the shepherd, he was at times looked upon with disfavour, as he was suspected of dishonesty (Derrett 1979b, 40; Hamel 1990, 118-9). Moreover, it was not always possible to keep the animals from grazing on cultivated land: 'the shepherds let their flocks into the pasturage which I have in the olive-grove of Thermoutharion' (P Ryl II 152[5])[4]. However, the shepherd did try to keep his sheep from straying on to unfenced fields, by calling to the animals as he went along. The sheep knew his voice, whereas if a stranger spoke to them, they panicked (Thomson, 1858, 203)[5]. John 10:4-6 may not be the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, but it does reflect the actual behaviour of sheep and shepherd.

The Division of Sheep from Goats: Why the Shepherd makes the Division

The only reference to goats in the Synoptic Gospels is in the symbolism of the final judgement (Matt 25:32-33): here the goats represent those who go to the left to eternal punishment, while the sheep represent those who go to the right to eternal life (Matt 25:46)[6]. It has been suggested that the symbolism arose because sheep are generally white and goats are generally black (Davies and Allison 1988-97, 3:423; Via 1987, 90). Certainly there is a rabbinic reference to the colour division: in answer to Rabbi Zera's question as to why goats march before sheep at the head of the flock, Rabbi Judah replies 'It is as the world's creation, darkness preceding then the light' (*b. Šabb* 77b). However, as noted above, goats are not always black, nor are sheep always white (Gen 30:32-3), so colour cannot be the main reason for the sheep/goats divide.

Drawing on the description of Polyphemus separating male from female in order to milk the latter (Homer *Odyssey* 9.237), Gnilka suggests that this was the reason for the division (1988, 2: 372 n.21): however, this is a division by gender not by species (see note7 below). The greater commercial value of the sheep, because of the superiority of sheep's wool over goat's hair, is noted by Lancaster (1991, 130) and cited as a possible reason by Davies and Allison (1988-97, 3:423) and Via (1987, 90).

The most practical reason for the *shepherd* to separate the flocks (Matt 25:32) was to provide goats with shelter from cold at night and (in the hotter areas) to provide sheep with some shelter from the heat during the day, (Lancaster 1991, 130).

However, the two species tend to separate into disparate groups naturally, and it is possible that behavioural differences suggested the symbolism of the 'negative' view of the goats and the 'positive' view of the sheep. The sheep by nature is biddable and more inclined to follow the shepherd, who leads the flock in the east: the goat '...is comparatively lawless, independent, inclined to wander...' (Tristram 1880, 94). Thus while behavioural differences may have suggested the symbolic division of the sheep from the goats, the literal division was due to the differing needs of the animals.

The Symbolism of the Division of the Sheep from the Goats

In speaking of Matthew 25:32, Derrett argues that 'the separation is a Christian revision of Torah (Lev 20:26) where God separated Israel from the heathen as he separated clean from unclean animals' (1997, 178). Certainly πάντα τὰ ἔθνη 'all the nations' would seem to suggest a division of races. However, it is clear from verses 37-46 in the Matthean pericope, that the division is between the righteous and unrighteous as individuals (as in Malachi 3:18): and indeed Derrett correctly goes on to say that the Messianic division is one of 'personal morality'. Thus Leviticus 20:26 does not seem the most likely precursor of Matthew 25:32: instead Ezekiel 34:17 διακρινῶ ἀνὰ μέσον προβάτου καὶ προβάτου, κριῶν καὶ τράγων (LXX) 'I will judge between sheep and sheep, ram and he goat'[7] seems a more likely prototype as here the context is one of individual righteousness or unrighteousness (*pace* Derrett 1997, 178 n.11). In the Hebrew Bible there does not seem to have been a pejorative use of 'goats' over and against 'sheep'. Although on the Day of Atonement, the animal which was driven into the wilderness to carry away the sins

of the people was a goat (Lev 16:21), both kids and lambs were used as sin-offerings (Lev 5:6).

The illustration of the separation of the sheep from the goats is not a parable in the usual sense of an illustrative story such as the 'lost sheep' (Matt 18:12-13; Luke 15:4-6). 'Once 25:33 is over, the parable of *The Sheep and the Goats* is effectively finished.... This might suggest that the shepherd imagery is a simile ' (Jones 1995, 251). That the illustration of the sheep and the goats is a simile rather than a parable is also noted by Goulder (1974, 53). Moreover, as Gnilka correctly observes, future tenses are not normally found in parables, which are usually told either in the present or past tense (1986-8, 2: 367). Usually the interpretation was either (a) that the disciples and Matthean audience identified with the righteous sheep or (b) they identified with the least brothers cared for by the sheep. Heil argues that both interpretations are to be taken (1998, 3-4). The ethical context of the illustration (the list of mercies shown, or not shown, in Matthew 25: 35-40, 42-45) is in keeping with other teaching attributed to Jesus. Nevertheless, the 'mercies' are not so radical as are some of the exhortations, such as 'love your enemies' (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27), 'go two miles' (Matt 5:41) or 'forgive till seventy times seven' (Matt 18:21), that seem more characteristic of the teaching associated with Jesus[8]. By contrast the injunctions in the list of mercies are 'easy' (Chrysostom *Hom. Matt.* 79.1). Thus Matthew's entire pericope with the illustration of the sheep and the goats may be his own composition, since there is no Synoptic parallel and some vocabulary is peculiar to Matthew (so Gundry 1982, 511; Gnilka 1986-8, 2: 367-70). Yet some element of an original parable may have been adapted (Davies and Allison 1989-97, 3:418).

Thus people will be divided into two groups, just as a shepherd divides his animals into two groups according to species. However, while the behavioural differences of sheep and goats may have suggested the positive / negative antithesis of the simile, there the similarity ends. (Matthew's symbolism ends with the division). At any rate the division is symbolic. In the final judgement, each individual will be judged according to the individual's own actions, and the righteous will be separated from the non-righteous. Thus people will be judged *according to their deeds* of righteousness or unrighteousness just as the animals are treated *according to their need*s of daytime coolness for the sheep and night warmth for the goats. The simile of separation does not mean that, in reality, goats would fare worse than sheep in their treatment by shepherds. In real life, the separation of the sheep from the goats by the shepherd is for the well-being of the animals; it is not for the preservation of one group and the destruction of the other. Although Matthew has attributed this simile to Jesus, he has not depicted Jesus as having no concern for domestic animals. Indeed as we will see in the next part of this chapter, the reverse may be argued.

The Lost Sheep: the Story in its Literal Sense

In the Synoptic Gospels the most well-known reference to sheep must surely be the parable of the one lost sheep which is sought by the shepherd, who leaves the other ninety-nine of his flock to go in search of it (Luke 15:4-6; Matt 18:12-13). The loss of the sheep was likely to have been discovered at evening when the animals were being counted into the fold (Bishop 1962, 50). Although Lancaster (1996, 130) says that sheep are hardy enough to be left out at night in the field, the field in question was likely to have been a fenced-in area. From earliest times shepherds built

sheepfolds for their animals (Num 32:24). The structure would vary with the terrain: in hill country, natural caves could be used (1 Sam 24:3); elsewhere, boulders were built into rough walls and topped with thorny branches, which is still done in a few parts of the Middle East today (Cansdale 1970, 53). Thus, if the loss were discovered at the time of counting into the fold, as seems most likely, the shepherd would already have put the animals into a safe place. It is also possible that the shepherd left the remaining sheep in the care of his fellow shepherds as did Muhammad adh-Dhib, who found Qumran Cave 1 (the first of the caves containing the Dead Sea Scrolls) when he went to look for a lost goat (Bishop 1962, 57 note K). That there was fellowship among the herdsmen is evident from Luke 2:8,15 and also from the remainder of the story in Luke 15:6 in which the shepherd tells his friends of his finding of the lost sheep. However, the goatherd of Qumran discovered the loss in the morning as he had failed to count the goats for the previous two days: in this case he had no option but to leave the remainder to pasture under the care of his companions. As we saw earlier, the shepherd may not have been the actual owner of the sheep. Since professional shepherds knew the best areas of herbage, they were often entrusted with the animals of owners who may have had large herds or perhaps only a single sheep.

If the shepherd were the owner in this instance, then the fact that he had ninety-nine animals safely penned does not preclude his going to find the stray, which may have been a weak straggler due to age or infirmity. Goulder suggests injury: 'We may note at once the Lucan *vividness* of imagination (§ 4.8). The shepherd is not a Matthaean clergyman-in-disguise, but heaves the hulking animal, with its damaged leg, on to his

shoulders' (Goulder 1989, 2:605). (It is surely Goulder's imagination at work here, as there is no mention of a 'damaged leg' in the text!). One reason for an animal going off by itself, was for a ewe to give birth. A Roman poem depicts the shepherd laying the newly delivered ewe across his shoulders and taking into his arms the newly born lamb 'trembling and as yet unable to stand on its hooves' (Calpurnius Siculus *Eclogae* 5.39). However, while a ewe with a newly born lamb would be a likely 'straggler', this instance does not fit the parable, as it involves the shepherd in bringing back *two* animals. Nevertheless, the straggler may well have been a pregnant ewe, cf. Isaiah 40:11 and also Columella's recommendation to shepherds, 'He who follows the flock should be observant and vigilant... and should be gentle in his management of them and also keep close to them... so that he may prevent the slower pregnant ewes, through delaying and those which are active and have already borne their young from becoming separated from the rest, lest a thief or a wild beast cheat the shepherd while he is daydreaming' (*De Re Rustica* 7.3.26). While the reason for the sheep's 'wandering' (Matt 18:12) or becoming 'lost' (Luke 15:4) is immaterial to the point of the parable, for the shepherd the loss of a pregnant ewe meant, in effect, the loss of two animals.

The variant localities of 'desert' (Luke 15:4) and 'mountain' (Matt 18:12) where the other animals were left, have given rise to several explanations. The 'wilderness' of Luke may have come from 1 Sam 17:29 (LXX) according to Fitzmyer (1981-5, 2:1077) while the 'mountain' of Matthew may be due to Matthean assimilation of the passage to Ezekiel 34:13 (Davies and Allison 1988-97, 2:769). A more comprehensive explanation has been suggested by Bussby (1963, 93-4): ἔρημος

and ὄρος can both mean 'open country' (M.M.) while the Aramaic *tura* meaning 'mountain' (or 'open country' in Palestinian Syriac) came into the oral tradition from a difficulty in the pronunciation of the dental 'd' of *dura* a 'fold'. Therefore, if Bussby is right, the shepherd left his ninety-nine sheep *in the fold* to go to look for the lost one. Any retranslation into Aramaic must always be treated with caution as it is dealing with probability and cannot be proved. Nevertheless, this particular suggestion is not only a linguistic possibility but also fits the literal and metaphorical reality. In other words, just as the remaining sheep were left in safety by the shepherd, so also were the remaining people in no danger while the 'lost' one was sought ('ninety-nine persons who need no repentance' Luke 15:7: 'the ninety-nine that never went astray' Matthew 18:13). (Here, Fitzmyer indicates possible irony if the ninety-nine refers to the scribes and Pharisees. However, he adds 'it may be a typical Lukan way of exaggerating God's joy at a repentant sinner' [1981-5, 2: 1078]). *Gospel of Thomas* §107 has a version of the story that depicts the shepherd as loving the one lost more than the others: this is a kingdom parable (Fitzmyer 1981-5, 2:1074). This logion has been interpreted as indicating that the shepherd neglected the ninety-nine to seek the one 'which I love more than the ninety-nine' (Valantasis (1997, 187; Patterson 1993, 239). This is hardly likely to reflect the actual behaviour either of a hired shepherd or an owner: the former would risk losing his livelihood if the animals were lost; the latter would lose his main form of subsistence. The silence in the parable about the other ninety-nine was the consequence of keeping to the point of the story, the joy at discovering the lost one (Davies and Allison 1988-97, 2:775).

The Contexts of the parable in Matthew and in Luke

The context of the parable in Matthew is an address by Jesus to his disciples to the effect that they, like God, should care for the 'little ones': 'divine love for the lost invites human love for the lost' (Davies and Allison 1988-97, 2:768). In Luke the context is of table-fellowship with sinners where Jesus maintains to the Pharisees that heaven (i.e. God) rejoices over the repentance of the 'lost'. In Matthew's version the flock is representative of the community of the early church, the lost sheep of a member gone 'astray'. In Luke's version the flock represents the God-fearing people of Israel, while the lost sheep symbolises a sinner regarded as being outwith the community of the pious. In *context* at least, Luke's would appear more likely to be the original version as Matthew's rendering does not seem to relate to a genuine life situation of Jesus (Jeremias 1972, 40; *pace* Fitzmyer 1981-5, 2:1074). However, as Stanton notes: 'It is probable that *both* evangelists have interpreted the parable by setting it in quite different contexts... a new context can easily alter the thrust of a particular tradition even if the original words are retained' (1983, 281). One voice raised in dissent is that of Goulder (1989, 2:604) who maintains that the parable is at least partly (if not wholly) Matthean invention. However, as he does not accept the existence of Q and maintains that Luke's Gospel combined Mark and Matthew with little or no special L material (*Sondergut*), his view tends to be an idiosyncratic one (Goulder 1989, 1:22-23).

Conclusion

The question raised by the story of the division of the sheep and the goats was: 'does this illustration reflect any negative attitude to goats in reality?' When we looked at

possible reasons for a shepherd's dividing goats and sheep, we concluded that the most likely explanation was that the shepherd wanted to provide the sheep with a cooler environment during the day and the goats with a warmer environment at night. Thus the literal division was for the animals' benefit. Behavioural differences of the species – the goat is inclined to wander while the sheep is more biddable – may have suggested the symbolism of a division in human behaviour, hence the use of the illustration of the shepherd's division in the final judgement. Put succinctly, the literal division of the sheep and the goats was on account of the animals' *needs*, the eschatological division of people was on account of their *deeds*.

That the division of the sheep and the goats is an illustration rather than a parable is indicated on linguistic grounds, such as the use of the future tense rather than the present or past (Gnilka 1986-8, 2: 367; so also Jones 1995, 251). This illustration attributed to Jesus might suggest a pejorative attitude to goats, yet no such attitude appears to have existed in Hebrew Scripture. Although a goat was used on the Day of Atonement to carry away the sins of the people (Lev 16:21), both kids and lambs were acceptable in sacrifice as sin-offerings (Lev 5:6). Instead, the illustration of the shepherd's division of the animals shows knowledge of everyday pastoral practice and *care* of the animals. While it may be argued that such pastoral illustrations may have been commonplace among country dwelling people such as Jesus and his companions, it is nevertheless surely indicative of an interest in such matters. At any rate, Matthew would be aware of the likelihood of such pastoral knowledge and interest on the part of Jesus.

At the beginning of this chapter we asked: 'what does the episode of the lost sheep indicate of attitudes to the living animals and their care?' The living sheep represented many things: to the farmer and shepherd it was a means of livelihood; to the priest the animal was a potential sacrifice; to the family it was a provider of wool and milk; to the children of the family, it may even have been a pet. In itself, the sheep was a vulnerable sentient creature. However, these are realities of the physical world: the sheep is a created being in this world, but is also emblematic of something beyond itself. In the parable of the lost sheep, the sheep was not only literally a sheep and metaphorically a human being, but it also acted as catalyst for the response of another. In the interaction of sheep and shepherd, the vulnerability of the sheep evokes the response of care from the shepherd. Here the shepherd also has a dual role: he is at the one time himself - a human being with responsibility - but he is also like God in the love which he shows to the sheep.

The sheep as metaphor for a human being was used earlier in Hebrew scripture. It was an image which Matthew, in particular, represents Jesus as using frequently with regard to the animals' vulnerability and need of protection (Matt 9:36; 15:24). There is a slight difference between the two accounts, in that in Luke the sheep is carried home in triumph, while in Matthew it is not certain that the shepherd finds the sheep. This difference may be due to Matthew's concentrating on the final outcome of the person returning to the 'fold', rather than a lack of interest in what happens to the sheep. Luke, on the other hand, begins by first maintaining the importance of the individual animal and then the importance of the individual human being. That the

story is not found in Mark may be due to his not having the parable in his sources as, elsewhere, he uses the metaphor of sheep as people (6:34; 14:27).

As we will see even more clearly in the next chapter, the Synoptic Jesus is perceived as taking it for granted that an individual human being would look to the welfare of a domestic animal, not only for the sake of the animal, but also because 'a righteous man has regard for the welfare of his beast' (Prov 12:10).

Endnotes: Erring Goats and Errant Sheep.

[1]Moses was regarded as the shepherd of his people (Philo *Mos.*6.2; and Ps 77:20). David also was seen in this light because of his care of the feeding of the flocks of sheep (*Exod. Rab.* 2.2; *Midr. Ps.* 78.21)

[2]See Driver (1932, 75-76) for discussion of the translation.

[3]Lincoln has indicated the difficulty of translating πρόβατον (particularly in the LXX) since there is no corresponding word in common use in English (such as Kleinvieh in German) which covers both sheep and goats (1996, 322-3). Although the terms 'caprovine' and 'ovicaprid' do cover both species, they are terms which are more suited to scientific than to literary usage and biblical translators have wisely avoided them.

[4]*Catalogue of the Greek Papyri in the John Rylands Library,Manchester.* (1911-15) edited by J.de M. Johnson, V. Martin, and A.S. Hunt, cited by M.M. under ποιμήν p.524.

[5]Hartley (1833, 307-8) describes how the Greek shepherds call individual sheep by their names to which the sheep respond. Even today, in late twentieth century, southern Europe, the custom of giving a name to a sheep continues. The leader, usually a wether (a castrated ram), is trained to respond to its name and a few basic signals, in parts of Italy, Greece and Romania (Tani 1989, 187-191).

[6]To go to the left was to go wrong (Jastrow 1926, 1591). The concept of the left as being ill-omened was common in antiquity (Virgil *Aeneid* 6.540-3; Plato *Respublica.* 10.614c).

[7]Of the Masoretic Text Zimmerli states that it is not certain whether the separation in Ezekiel 34:17 is between sheep and goats: he translates 'the right of one sheep against another, against rams and goats' (1983, 208, 217). In Daniel 7:3-8 the rams and he-goats represent the enemy leaders: here, the possible zodiacal symbolism is discussed by Goldingay (1989, 208-9) and Collins (1993, 330).

[8]For a detailed discussion of the ethics in the pericope see Jones (1995, 257-259) and Via (1987, 94-99).

Excursus One: The *Kriophoros*, the Good Shepherd and Sacrifice.

At least some of the animals in every Jewish flock were destined for sacrifice, but there were varying attitudes to the sacrificial cultus in the Hebrew tradition. This excursus takes a *very brief* look at some of the attitudes to sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, as well as the tension between care for, and sacrifice of, the animal, as expressed in the images of the 'good shepherd' and the *kriophoros.*

The phrase 'the Good Shepherd' may well call to mind the third century marble statue at the Vatican Museum in Rome (Clark 1977, 169, pl.132; Finegan 1946, 383-4, fig.167). The lamb turns its head to look at the youthful shepherd, who holds it in his arms. The image conveyed is one of loving care on the part of the shepherd and trust on the part of the lamb. The inspiration for the statue would appear to be the passage from John 10:11, 'I am the good shepherd'. Yet there are undertones also of the story of the lost sheep of Luke 15:5, with the detail of the lamb being carried (albeit in the arms and not across the shoulders). Another famous marble statue, 'the Calf-bearer' which is now in the Acropolis Museum, Athens, was carved some eight centuries earlier than the 'Good Shepherd' (Clark 1977, 168, pl. 131; Richter 1930, 20, 63, fig.87). The Calf-bearer is portrayed with the stylised archaic smile of the period, and carries the calf slung round his shoulders with its forelegs bent back at an awkward angle. In this case the animal is probably destined for sacrifice. In comparing the statue of the Good shepherd with that of the Calf-bearer, Clark asks, 'But at a deeper level may not the memory of the sacrificial victim still linger?' (1977, 169).

The Prototype of the Good Shepherd

In order to answer Clark's question with its theological implication, we should perhaps look to the origins of the image of man carrying an animal. Fitzmyer mentions early Assyrian and Syrian representations of people carrying animals as prototypes for the Good Shepherd (1981-5, 2:1077). However, this enduring image may trace its origins back even earlier, to the fifth millenium BCE, to prehistoric rock engravings found in the Ksour Mountains in western Algeria (Muller 1944, 87). In one of these paintings a group of four animals and three humans is figured; one of the humans is female and is represented as crouching with a horned animal drawn round her neck and shoulders (Muller 1944, 89, fig.2). Egyptian rock drawings dating from the same era show a female figure, this time standing, with a horned animal round her shoulders (Muller 1944, 87, 88, fig.1). Muller suggests that both sets of images represent magical rites for increasing the herds and that the animal on the shoulders of the crouching figure would indicate the care taken of the young animals (1944, 88). In discussing later Egyptian funerary representations of the animals being carried either in the arms or on the shoulders, Muller speaks of these as being 'realistic' and that 'no magic meaning is certain for the Egyptian representations of historic times, except ... that the decoration of the tombs ... is intended to perpetuate life into all eternity'. However, this interpretation verges on the 'magical' and it must be remembered that the Pharaohs at least were regarded as divine. The natural and the divine were not so easily distinguished as Muller appears to argue in this instance. He suggests that the representations in Syrian art derived from the Egyptian, since in Mesopotamian art the animal is carried in the arms, as

exemplified by the third century BCE statue of the worshipper of Ishtar found at Mani (Finegan 1946, 46 fig.21).

The best known prototype of the 'Good Shepherd' with the lamb, is of course Hermes, as *Kriophoros* or 'Ram-bearer'[1]. Hermes is regarded as the one 'who increases the herds' and is portrayed in a bronze statue with a ram at his side, on the road to Lechaeum according to Pausanias (*Corinth* 2.3.4). However, the origin of Hermes as ram-bearer was the story of his carrying a ram on his shoulders, as he walked round the outside of Tanagra to save the city from the plague (Pausanias *Boetia* 9.22.1). The ram may well have been sacrificed after being carried round the walls. A lesser-known image, albeit a literary one, is that of Moses carrying across his shoulders a kid which had strayed away to find water (*Exod. Rab.* 2.2).

Thus fertility rites, sacrifice for purification and propitiation, and a wish for wealth and comfort in the afterlife were all, at one time or another in the ancient world, reasons for portraying, in various art forms, a human being carrying an animal from a domestic herd. Although cultures and civilisations borrowed ideas from one another, some aspects of religion such as therianthropism were adapted rather than borrowed. In Egypt, for example, the gods were part animal, part human (like Horus the falcon headed god). Indeed Frazer suggests that the *kriophoros* was derived from 'that primitive state of religion when the gods were animals or at least were clothed in animal forms' (1898, 89). Although Zeus, for example, could adopt the form of an animal, this was not the normal form of the god in the Graeco-Roman religion. The Graeco-Roman religion, instead, had animals which were sacred to the gods, either

as particular herds like the cattle of Hyperion in Homer's *Odyssey* (12. 297-396) and the flock of geese sacred to Juno on the Capitoline Hill (Livy 5.17.4), or as a species such as the little owl (*Athene noctua*) which was sacred to Athene (Aristophanes *Aves* 516)[2].

The Concept and Practice of Sacrifice

The concept of sacrifice entailed giving up to a god or God something that was of value to the worshipper: in the case of animal sacrifice this would be a creature that would normally be eaten for food. From the domestic herds it was the best animals, the first-born without blemish that were offered (Deut 15:19-21). The ritual method of slaughter (*shechitah*) by slitting the throat with a sharp knife was in effect probably the most humane in antiquity (*b.Ḥul.* 27a; *b. Ket.*37b). Milgrom has argued that this method may have been in place centuries earlier (Deut 12:21) and that it was humanitarian in origin (1963, 290). He may be right, but it is possible that the *original* aim of such a method was exsanguination *per se* (cf. Gen 9.4) rather than humanitarianism. At any rate, ethical considerations for the animals had at least evolved with the practice, even if such considerations were not the original primary object of the ritual. The long detailed lists in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 stated what the Deuteronomic priests regarded as 'clean' and suitable for the Hebrews to eat along with the 'unclean' creatures which were forbidden. However, from this former list only some animals were suitable as sacrifice; fish, for instance, might be eaten (Lev 11:9, Deut 14:9) but was not offered in sacrifice. The use of animals for sacrifice had its parallels in the cultural worlds of Jew, Greek and Roman. By New Testament times the paganism of the Greeks and Romans, and the ensuing sacrifices

to the gods, still remained as part of everyday life, in spite of the philosophical advancement of Plato's 'the supreme Good' (*Timaeus* 28C-29A) which arguably suggested a supreme deity[3]. On the other hand the henotheism of the Israelites had long since given way to Jewish monotheism.

In Hebrew scripture a ram is substituted for Isaac (Gen 22:13). In Christian theology Jesus becomes *in effect* the substitute for sacrificial animals (Heb 10:12). Although in both cases (Isaac and Jesus) the sacrifice is to God on behalf of people, there has been a significant development in principle away from the continual shedding of blood. It was, however, a development that had begun centuries earlier in the thought that sin-offerings were no alternative to a righteous life. 'For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice' said the eighth century prophet Hosea (6:6)[4]. Other prophets spoke to the same effect (Micah 6:6-8; Amos 5:21-24)[5]. Earlier the idea was to be found in 1 Samuel 15:22 that 'to obey is better than sacrifice': indeed, as Andersen and Freedman point out, there is no mention of sacrifice in the Decalogue (1980, 430). Psalm 50:5 acknowledges that a covenant was made by sacrifice, the 'covenant ratification sacrifice' of Genesis 15:7-21 (Hasel 1981, 70), but states that God wants a sacrifice of thanksgiving (Ps 50:14, 23). As Seybold suggests, psalm-prayer may accompany or even replace sacrificial offerings (1990, 85). Later, animal sacrifice was regarded as completely inadequate in Christian theology (Heb 10:4). The death of Jesus then became regarded as the once for all sacrifice, on behalf of his people (Gal 3:13; Heb 10:12). 'Many, probably most, of the early converts to Christianity had been accustomed to a form of worship in which animal sacrifices played a part; this was so whether they had previously been Jews or Gentiles. That

their new form of worship had no place for such sacrifices was in itself a recognition that they had been rendered obsolete by the death of Christ' (Bruce 1990, 247)[6]. To put it another way, the shepherd has become the sacrifice (Muller 1944, 90). The fall of the Temple in 70 CE also meant the end of sacrifice there for the Jewish people[7].

Jesus and Sacrifice

Matthew more than once (9:13; 12:7) portrays Jesus as quoting Hosea 6:6 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice'. One possible reason for this citation was a rejection of temple sacrifice *per se*: 'Matthew probably understood the verse as a complete rejection of temple sacrifice' (Meier 1980, 94; *pace* Davies and Allison 1989-97, 2:105, 315). Against such an interpretation, of course, is the command to the newly cleansed leper in Mark 1:44 (Matt 8:4; Luke 5:14) to show himself to the priest and make the prescribed sacrificial offering (Lev 14:10). However, this is the only occasion where Jesus is depicted as ordering such an offering to be made after a healing of the ritually unclean (cf. Mark 5:25-34; Luke 17:12-19). While the commentators remark on the inclusion of the command in Mark 1:44, its uniqueness appears to be ignored. Guelich argues that the account offered evidence against those who accused Jesus as having disregarded the Law (1989, 77). This may be the reason why the command is included: but, it is not necessarily an argument for its historicity. Moreover, although there is no specific offering for other types of healing, it might be expected that a general thanksgiving offering (Lev 7:11-15) could be made: yet the Synoptic Jesus is never shown as suggesting this, after other healings or exorcisms, by any of the evangelists. (There is a reference to sacrificial offerings in Matthew 5:24, but not in the context of healings.)

Another possible reason for Matthew's portrayal of Jesus as quoting Hosea 6:6 was that he saw Jesus at least as being in line with the prophets' denunciation of sacrifice instead of a righteous life. Here Luz is correct when he argues that Matthew's understanding of Hosea 6:6 is 'total obedience': without love towards a neighbour, all sacrificial offerings are useless (1990, 44). In both the Markan and Q traditions Jesus is shown as being against the accretions to the Temple of sellers of sacrificial animals and money-changers, who were making a profit out of the sacrificial system (Mark 11:15-17; Matt 21:12-13: Luke 19: 45-46). Thus, although it is possible that as a Jew, Jesus would have accepted the concept of sacrifice (and this is debatable), in both the Markan and Q traditions, he is represented as speaking out against the way in which it was practised. One other factor to bear in mind is the probability that the gospels of Matthew and Luke were written after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, when the temple was destroyed and sacrifices were no longer possible.

Conclusion

Clark's question regarding the image of the good shepherd was: 'But at a deeper level may not the memory of the sacrificial victim still linger?' In the careful phrasing of his question, Clark has left open the possibility of looking at the image of the good shepherd as *kriophoros* at more than one level. On the surface the image reflects the story of the conscientious shepherd who looks for, and brings back the lost individual even though the rest of the flock is safe (Luke 15:5). This interpretation is kindly and pleasant, the shepherd is caring, and the lamb (or sheep) is trusting as depicted in the Lateran statue. However, the passage in John, in which Jesus is the good shepherd, takes the image a stage further: here the shepherd is caring, but is also ready to lay

down his life for his sheep (John 10:11). Finally in Revelations 5:6, the image has changed again, the 'shepherd' has become the unblemished sacrificial lamb. Thus, by implication, the original lamb in the Lateran statue represents the redeemed human: the roles have been reversed, but the underlying dark image of sacrifice remains. At a deeper level, the answer to Clark's question must be 'yes' since, irrespective of how Jesus' attitude to the sacrificial cultus was perceived by the gospel writers, in Christian theology, the shepherd has become the sacrifice. Finally, although it cannot be said that Matthew undoubtedly saw Jesus as being totally against animal sacrifice, Matthew certainly portrays him as following in the prophetic tradition of denouncing an offering of sacrifice where no love is shown to others.

Endnotes: excursus one.

[1]It is known that both Kalamis and Onatas (Greek sculptors who flourished in the fifth century BCE) carved statues of the Hermes *kriophoros*. Kalamis portrayed Hermes as carrying the ram on his shoulders (Pausanias *Boetia* 9.22.1): Onatas chose to show the ram in the arms of Hermes (Pausanias *Elis* 5.27.8). Neither statue is extant. Coins of Tanagra in the British Museum show 'copies' of the Kalamis pose (Richter 1946, 203); other possible copies of both statues still exist (Frazer 1898, 87-90, and fig. 5)

[2]See Attenborough for a discussion of changing attitudes to animals in the countries of the Mediterranean in the Ancient Near East (1987, 64-118).

[3]For a brief overall discussion of the spiritual aspects of Plato's philosophy see Skemp (1989, 110-120, particularly p.118).

[4]Both MT *kî ḥesed ḥāpaṣtî w^{e} lō'-zābah* and LXX διότι ἔλεος θέλω καὶ οὐ θυσία have 'and *not* sacrifice' rather than 'as well as sacrifice'. Hosea 6:6 has two parts 'For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings.' Wolfe regards the *lō* of 6a and the *min* of 6b as being negative, i.e. that the latter particle in parallelism with the former takes the meaning of the former 'not' (1974, 120). Anderson and Freedman more cautiously leave open the question as to whether both particles are to be understood as comparative 'more than' (the usual meaning of *min*) or negative 'not' (*lō*), instead they opt for 'rather than' which is a 'convergence of the two particles' senses' (1980, 430).

[5]The possibility that the prophets were speaking out against the priestly cultus either as well as, or even rather than, animal sacrifice is discussed in Wolfe (1974, 79-81).

[6]The way in which Jesus viewed his own death is outwith the scope of this work.

[7]Whitcomb suggests that 'millenial animal sacrifices will be used...before the inauguration of the eternal state when animals will presumably no longer exist' (1985, 217). However, this completely ignores the image of messianic peace with the animals in Isaiah 11:6-9.

6. The Animal in the Pit

One of the few instances in the Synoptic Gospels of a reference to a real animal, is that of the sheep in the pit (Matt 12:11) with the parallel in Luke 14:5. In the Lukan text, there are variant readings regarding the identification of the casualty, which we will be discussing. The context of both verses is a healing on the Sabbath: in Matthew, Jesus heals a man with a withered hand; in Luke, he heals a man with dropsy. In neither case was the illness life threatening. In view of the prohibitions which had arisen out of the interpretation of the fourth commandment (Exod 20:3-17; Deut 5:7-21), what were the prevailing attitudes to the care of animals and to the healing of people on the Sabbath? How is Jesus portrayed in comparison with these attitudes in relation to the working animals? First of all let us look at healing on the Sabbath.

Healing on the Sabbath

Later Rabbinic rulings stated that healing was allowed on the Sabbath only if life was threatened (*m. Yom.* 8.6), yet there were ways of circumventing this (*m. Šabb.*14.4, 22.6). However, the attitude of the Pharisees would indicate that they had already adopted the view of healing only when life was threatened (Yang 1997, 200). In speaking of the Markan parallel (Mark 3:1-5) of the Matthean version of the healing, Sanders correctly points out that Jesus did not in fact perform any work in this healing: 'Talking is not regarded as work in any Jewish tradition...' (1990, 21; so also Vermes 1993, 23; Meier 1991-4, 2:683). Here, it should perhaps be noted that the Damascus Document forbids people even to talk of work on the Sabbath (CD 10.19).

However, it was the effect of the talking which gave rise to Pharisaic concern. Yet nowhere in Hebrew Scripture does it state specifically that healing is not permitted on the Sabbath (Yang 1997, 200). It is interesting that in both the Lukan and Matthean versions, Jesus is depicted as taking for granted that the owner of the animal puts humanitarian issues before Sabbath observance. As Westerholm points out: 'His opposition never took expression in specific regulations proposed as alternatives to Pharisaic ones....he countered by undermining on moral grounds rather than legal grounds the understanding of his opponents'(1978, 102). In defending his own action of healing the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, Jesus is depicted as arguing that people will adopt the humanitarian approach: 'he speaks of the practice of farmers who have sheep, not of a Halakah of the learned' (Luz 1990, 2:238).

In the Damascus Document, strict observance of the Sabbath overrode humanitarian concerns (CD 11.13): not only was it forbidden to help an animal out of a pit into which it had fallen, it was also forbidden to help an animal give birth on the Sabbath. If the latter commandment were carried out to the letter, then some animals may well have died for lack of human assistance. The Roman author Columella states that sheep require as much assistance as a woman in giving birth (*De Re Rustica* 7.3.16). According to the Mishnah, it was allowed to give aid to women giving birth on the Sabbath (*m. Šabb.* 18.3). Even the rigidity of the Damascus Document allowed for a man's being pulled out of the pit (CD 11.16-17) although this was limited by the prohibition of the use of ladders, ropes or other utensils, which had to be carried (Doering 1997, 264-265; cf. Vermes 1995, 13). However, the detailed fragment

4Q265 7i6-7 does allow for the use of a garment to save a person[1]. Later, the Talmudic ruling gave two interpretations of the case of the animal in the pit: in the milder ruling, according to Rab. Judah, it was permitted to throw bedding into the pit, so that the animal could climb out (the bedding could not then be removed on the Sabbath); in the stricter ruling it was permitted to provide food only (*b. Šabb.* 128b).

It is noteworthy that for both Luke and Matthew, Jesus does not assume that an owner would only provide food (and presumably water) but would actually take the animal out of the pit. Since Torah treated man and beast alike with regard to the Sabbath, in that both were granted rest from work (Exod 23:12), Jesus (as depicted here), by assuming a similar concern for the welfare of man and beast on the Sabbath, was actually closer to the teachings of Torah in this respect than were the Pharisees. They, presumably, would have considered it in order to remove an animal from a pit, but not to heal a human being on the Sabbath, (according to the implied answer to Jesus' question). Elsewhere, Hebrew Scripture maintained that: 'A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast' (Prov 12:10). Whether the exchange with the Pharisees was Halakhic logic or not, (Yang 1997, 204), the conclusion attributed to Jesus was that 'it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath' (Matt 12:12). The implication is that the farmers acted from a desire *to help the animal.* The *qal wahomer* argument reasons, if it was good to help an animal it was even more important to help a fellow human being. As the nature of a *qal wahomer* argument starts from an accepted given, then it would be taken for granted that in the context of time and place depicted, the animal would be taken out of the pit by the farmer even on the Sabbath. Thus compassion overrode Halakhic arguments of what

constituted work on the Sabbath. Later in the chapter, we will return to the question of how animals were treated on the Sabbath in other contexts, but first let us look at the identity of the casualty in the pit.

The Animal in the Pit: the Sheep in Matthew.

The question arises whether ἕν πρόβατον in Matthew 12:11 means 'one sheep' or 'a sheep': in Greek, as in Aramaic, the word for 'one' is also the word for the indefinite article[2]. While Luz treats the story as relating back to Nathan's parable of the man who had one ewe lamb, which he loved dearly, Gnilka asks more cautiously: 'Is the action of a poor man, who has a single sheep only, motivated by love and compassion?' (1986-88, 1:448). Gnilka's implication is that economic self-interest may be involved in the decision to rescue the animal. However, poverty and compassion are not mutually exclusive. Certainly there would have been less economic imperative for a more affluent farmer with a large flock to rescue one animal: but it cannot be assumed that a wealthy owner effecting a rescue would be more motivated by compassion than a poor man.

'Sheep are often made pets of, especially by the poor in the towns, who will rear in their courtyards one or two ewe lambs for the sake of their milk; though it is not uncommon to see a foundling lamb under the tent of the nomad admitted to intimate familiarity. Nathan's parable to David was taken from everyday life' (Tristram 1880, 143).

The Identity of the Casualty in Luke

In Matthew 12:11 there is no doubt about the animal's being a sheep. There is certainly a predilection in the Gospel of Matthew for the sheep metaphor (Heil 1993, 698). Although Heil excludes Matthew 12:11 as part of the overall metaphor which he relates to Ezekiel 34, nevertheless, it is possible that the use of 'sheep' in this verse is Matthean redaction (Davies and Allison 1988-97, 2:320). In Luke 14:5 there are several versions of what falls into the pit or well[3] :

1. child (υἱὸς) or ox (βοῦς)

2. ass (ὄνος) or ox (βοῦς): (some manuscripts read ox or ass)

3. child (υἱὸς) or ox (βοῦς) or ass (ὄνος): (alternatively ass or child or ox)

4. sheep (πρόβατον)

5. sheep (πρόβατον) or ox (βοῦς)

The reading of 5. appears in a few Latin versions only and appears to be an assimilation to the Matthean text. The reading of 4. would also appear to be an assimilation to Matthew and is attested in the Western Tradition only. The readings at 3. do not have the best manuscript witnesses and are probably conflations. This leaves either 1. child or ox: or 2. ass or ox/ ox or ass.

Which of the readings is correct? One explanation is that υἱὸς (child) is a misreading of ὀΐς (sheep) a suggestion adopted by Wellhausen (1904, 78). However, ὀΐς is a poetic word rarely found in Greek prose (Marshall 1978, 580). Another suggestion is that the original Aramaic contained *bar ḥamra* (ass) and *b^{e}ʿira* (ox). This possibility was looked at by Black (1967, 126) whose own suggestion was that the original Aramaic had the one word *b^{e}ʿira*, which can be a generic name for

'beast of burden', which in turn gave rise to the various animals and also to *b^{e}ra* son. A third possibility is that the original pun in the Aramaic (noted by Black) on *b^{e}ʿira* (beast) and *bēra* (well) was extended to include *b^{e}ra* (son) by 'a genuine oriental extension' (Jeremias 1956, 9). That there was a pun on 'beast'/'well' may be accepted. However, Black's suggestion that the generic 'beast' gave rise to the various animals in the Greek texts, needs qualification. While ὄνος (ass) may have originated in *bar ḥamra* and βοῦς (ox) in *b^{e}ʿira* , there is no corresponding play on words with the Aramaic for sheep *kebeś* to give rise to πρόβατον. It seems more likely that, as stated earlier, 'sheep' is an assimilation in the Greek texts to Matthew 12:11. An understanding of *b^{e}ʿira* as 'ox' may well have led to the logical inclusion of *bar ḥamra* 'ass' as the animals were so often linked together: for example, in the Sabbath rest of Exodus 23:12 and also the accidental falling into an *uncovered pit* (Exod 21:33)[4]. It may be that, in an alternative oral tradition, *b^{e}ra* (child) crept in as a more euphonic extension of the original pun, but it is not a logical extension (*pace* Jeremias).

Fitzmyer suggests that there is an *a pari* argument from the child to the ox (1981-5, 2:1041): however, this is surely a peculiar way of arguing in contrast to the usual *a fortiori* method. Strangely, Fitzmyer seems to miss the point that even at Qumran the child would be pulled from the pit as life was threatened: if the cistern/pit contained water the child would otherwise drown, (cf. Genesis 37:24). Φρέαρ (Luke 14:5) is normally a 'well' (BAGD 1979, 865), Hebrew *b^{e}ʾēr* (BDB 1979, 91): βόθυνος in Matthew 12:11 is usually a 'pit' (BAGD 1979, 144), Hebrew *paḥat* (BDB 1979, 809). However, both φρέαρ (Jer 14:3) and βόθυνος (2 Kgs 3:16) are used in the

Septuagint to translate *gēb* 'pit' or 'cistern' (BDB 1979, 155). Therefore, the example of the child was not a logical defence of the healing of a non life-threatening condition. In short, logically and textually, the best reading is 'ox or ass'[5]. As with the sheep in Matthew's version, the point of the saying is that the welfare of the animal overrode the concern of keeping the Sabbath.

The Working Animals of the Synoptic Gospels[6]

Oxen

As with sheep and goats in the previous chapter, it may be useful to look at the part played by oxen and asses in Jewish life. The ox, descended from the now extinct aurochs (*Bos primigenius*), seems to have been first domesticated in the Near East and also in the Balkans (Gautier 1990, 4,145). By the beginning of the Bronze Age, oxen had become part of farming in the Nile Valley and over much of Eurasia (Pullen 1992, 48; Cansdale 1970, 57,82). The ox was used for ploughing (Prov 14:4), for treading out the grain (Deut 25:4) and, occasionally, as a draught animal (Num 7:3). Like the ass, the ox could also be hired out to those who had no animal for ploughing (*m. B. Meṣ.* 3.2). As in the case of the ass, most people would have the one animal (Safrai 1997, 168). The more affluent might have a pair of oxen for ploughing, as was the norm on the large Italian estates (cf. Varro *De Re Rustica* 1.20.1-5). Sound economic sense was combined with concern for the well-being of oxen on such estates (Columella *De Re Rustica*. 2.2.22-28).

Donkeys

A descendent of the Nubian wild ass (*Equus asinus*), the ass or donkey was one of the earliest animals to be domesticated at least five thousand years ago and was introduced to Israel from Egypt (Dent 1972, 68; Cansdale 1970, 71). In most households there would be only one ass (most scriptural references are in the singular) which was used for riding (Mark 11:2,7), as a beast of burden (Luke 10:34), and for turning the millstone (Matt 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2)[7]. As in the case of the ox, owners could also hire out their animal (*t. B.Meṣ.* 6.3-4). Packs of asses were taken from place to place, where the drivers sold one load and bought another (*b. B.Meṣ.* 3.25, *Gen. Rab.* 8.2). A regular weekly (Sabbath) day's rest for the animals was a kindness which may not have been extended to their Graeco-Roman counterparts: 'There is no holiday for mules, horses or donkeys except the family festivals' (Cato *De Agri Cultura* 1.38). However, on the feast of Vesta (9th June) the mill donkeys were decked with leaves and garlands and given a week's holiday (Ovid *Fasti* 6.311, 347, 348.). In Italy, packs of asses were used for draught work and for the mills (Varro *De Re Rustica* 2.6.4). As a riding animal it was not favoured in the Graeco-Roman world, where the horse or mule was used instead. The lot of the ass on the large Italian estates was an unenviable one: the animal was noted for its ability to endure harsh treatment and to live on poor quality pasturage (Columella *De Re Rustica* 7.1.1)[8]. The ass of Biblical lands was more attractive and stronger than its southern European counterpart; it was also livelier, happier and more friendly (Klotz 1981, 147; Donner 1976, 44)[9].

Comparative Attitudes to Working Animals

What, then, was the general attitude to working animals? 'The relationship between man and animal is directly affected by the cultural and intellectual environment of the societies and civilisations in which it is rooted' (Bodson 1983, 312). Broadly speaking, this statement is true. However, even within religious groups and civilisations, personal attitudes to animals can vary widely. There were instances of concern for the treatment of beasts of burden voiced in Hellenistic times: for example Plutarch spoke of the bathhouse donkey 'always foul with smoke and ashes, but getting no bath or warmth or cleanliness' (*De Amor. Plut.* 5 §525E). In the poem by Secundus there is a poignant plaint from the ass, turning the millstone: '... Is it not enough that, driven in a circle and blindfolded, I am forced to turn the heavy millstone? But I must compete with horses too!...'(*Anthologia Graeca* 3.301). Plutarch also roundly condemned Cato the Elder (author of *De Agri Cultura* and noted for his personal austerity and meanness) who left his horse in Spain after campaigning with him for months, ostensibly to save the state the cost of transporting him to Italy. Cato also ruthlessly sold off his old slaves as well as his worn-out beasts (Plutarch *Life of Cato* 5.6).

Plutarch, writing three centuries later (first century CE) after Cato, declared 'We ought not to treat living things as we do our clothes and our shoes and throw them away after we have worn them out.... For my part I would not even sell an ox that had laboured for me because he was old...' (*Life of Cato* 5.5). A complete contrast to Cato's treatment of his horse is found in the picture painted of the Trojan hero Pandaros, who preferred to leave his horses at home rather than expose them to the

uncertainties of the battlefield (*Iliad* 5.201-203): the character may have been a literary creation of the eighth century BCE, the concept of care was not. At the building of the Parthenon, one old mule no longer used for carrying stones up to the Acropolis continued to make the journey up and down with the mules that were still working. A decree was passed to have it kept at public expense; other old mules were pensioned off and allowed to find their own grazing (Aristotle *Historia Animalium* 6.24 §577b 34; Plutarch *De Solertia Animalium* 13 §970 A-B). As we have seen, Columella was concerned for the well-being of his oxen for their own sakes (and not solely for economic reasons): for him care of the beasts extended to the way in which they were fed and cared for at the end of the day, in giving them a rest at the end of each furrow they had ploughed and in frequently easing the yoke off their necks to prevent the skin becoming galled (*De Re Rustica* 2.2.22-28; 2.3.1-2). Virgil also speaks of the care of young oxen being trained for the plough in that the bullocks were first used to slender osier collars before the wooden yokes. The bullocks were also to be fed on young corn (*Georgics* 3.163-176). These samples shown are from different centuries in the Graeco-Roman tradition and, of necessity, form a very small random selection only. However, the point is that, no matter what the prevailing customs were, in every cultural milieu there was a variety of personal attitudes to animals as indeed there was towards people.

Although there may be some grounds for arguing that concern for domestic animals was due, at least in part, to economic reasons, nevertheless for the Jewish people there was a tradition of care for domestic animals based on Torah (see excursus 2). Certainly, there have been opinions voiced that some of such passages from Torah

were intended to be interpreted figuratively and this is discussed in the excursus. However, both Josephus (*Ant.* 4.8.21 §233) and Philo (*De Virtutibus* 27.145) argued for a literal interpretation of Deuteronomy 25:4 ('you shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain'): they offered a similar literal interpretation of Deuteronomy 22:10 ('you shall not plough with an ox and an ass together') Josephus (*Ant.* 4.8.20 §228) and Philo (*De Virtutibus* 27.146): they contended that these injunctions were for the humane treatment of the animals. Later, there was rabbinic argument to the effect that these passages from Torah were to be interpreted literally: '(The avoidance of suffering) of dumb animals is a Biblical (law), so the biblical law comes and supersedes the (interdict) of the Rabbis' (*b. Šabb.* 128b). The principle of *ṣa'ar ba'alê ḥayyim*, literally the 'pain of living beings' found in rabbinic literature is derived from scriptural passages such as Exodus 23:4-5 and Deuteronomy 22:1-4 which deal with lost animals and overloaded asses (Schochet 1984, 151). Although the rabbis argued as to how such passages were to be interpreted, the fact that they derived a concept of 'the avoidance of animal suffering' from these passages is surely significant. While the rabbinic arguments were certainly *written* after the lifetime of Jesus, discussion of the interpretations of texts such as Deuteronomy 25:4 must surely have taken place during his lifetime and indeed even before it.

Treatment of Animals on the Sabbath

Domestic animals would be led out to water on the Sabbath (Luke 13:15). Here the Mishnah describes how public wells are enclosed so that cattle, and presumably other domestic animals, could drink as though on private (not public) property and thus not contravene the Sabbath (*m. 'Erub.* 2.1-4). This argument is cited as defence in Luke

13:10-17, when Jesus is accused of contravening the Sabbath by curing the crippled woman in Luke 13:10-17. Like the incident of the animal in the pit, this is a *qal wahomer* argument: if it was good to care for an animal on the Sabbath, then it was also good to care for a human being. 'In effect, Jesus argues that his act does not violate the Sabbath, but fits the very spirit of the day' (Bock, 1994-6, 2:1219).

The Jewish regulations on Sabbath travel and the unloading of the ass referred to the traveller who had reached his destination after the beginning of Sabbath (*m. Šabb.* 24.1). The animals could also be led on the Sabbath as long as they did not carry a load (*m. Šabb.* 5.1-4). It must be conceded that not all rabbis took the humanitarian view. R. Gamaliel did not unload his ass on the Sabbath by undoing the fastenings and allowing the load to slip off the beast's back (on to soft material if the load was breakable), which was permitted on the Sabbath (*m. Šabb.* 24.1): the unfortunate animal consequently died (*b. Šabb.* 154b). Gamaliel's argument was that 'the suffering of dumb animals is (only) Rabbinically forbidden' (!). Yet, perhaps this incident is mentioned as a notable exception to a general rule.

Nevertheless, there seems to have been an enduring strand of genuine concern for the well-being of domestic animals, a concern which was not based solely on financial self-interest but on compassion for fellow creatures. It may be that such compassion was not simply for the animal *per se*, but was to be understood as an expression of righteousness on the part of the person. Indeed the only two biblical figures to merit the expression *ṣadîq* 'one who practises charity' are Noah and Joseph, because they provided food for both humans and animals in times of famine and

emergency (*Tan. Noah* 3). The Rabbinic passages: 'It is forbidden to a man to taste anything until he has given food to his beast' (*b. Git.* 62a) and 'A man has not got the right to purchase a domesticated beast, a wild beast, or a bird unless he has provided food for them' (*y. Ketub.* 4.8) followed the same thought as 'A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast' (Prov 12:10) which may have been written in the fourth century BCE[10]. A concern for domestic animals thus had its roots in Torah, was found in other scriptural writings, was used in rabbinic argument and was also attributed to Jesus.

Conclusion

The species of animal in the pit, which illustrates the Sabbath controversy, varies in the two Gospels. Matthew refers to a sheep (12:11), which is in keeping with the references elsewhere in Matthew (to sheep as the people of God). In Luke 14:5, the variants involve ox, ass, sheep (and child) any one of which could have fallen into a pit. As we have seen the reference to the child is arguably not original. We concluded that the identity of the casualty in Luke was 'ox or ass'. It seems that Luke's version tends to take a more literal view of the situation with regard to the animals, Matthew's version with the sheep, on the other hand, probably reflects his fondness for the metaphor of sheep as people, even though the passage refers to a living animal. Thus Luke tends to the more literal, Matthew to the more symbolic as was observed by Goulder (1974, 101). However, the basic principle remains the same in both versions: the welfare of the individual, whether animal or human, overrides the observance of Sabbath. That the episode of the animal in the pit is not found in Mark, may be due to his not having this tradition in his sources as, elsewhere, Mark refers

to Sabbath controversy (2:23-28). He also uses the metaphor of sheep as people (6:34; 14:27).

At the beginning of the chapter, we asked 'what were the prevalent attitudes of the time?' A review of the various sources of Hebrew scripture, the writings from Qumran and Rabbinic literature revealed that there were differing interpretations of various texts relating to animals. According to the Damascus document (CD 11.3), at Qumran the animal would have been left in the pit on the Sabbath. A man in the same circumstances would have been lucky to have been rescued, if the Damascus document was obeyed to the letter (4Q271 3ill; see note 1). However, it must be remembered that the Qumran texts were written over a period of years and for various groups (Vermes 1995, 9) so that the actual praxis at Qumran may not always have been so harsh. In the later Talmudic rulings on the subject of an animal in a pit on the Sabbath, there were two interpretations. In the stricter, it was permissible to provide food (and water) only: in the milder, it was permissible to throw bedding into the pit, so that the animal could climb out (*b. Šabb.* 128b). Such rabbinic argument derived from interpretations of Torah.

In Torah, Sabbath rest was granted to animals as well as to people (Exod 23:12). Texts such as the injunction: 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain' (Deut 25:4) gave rise to various possible interpretations including the allegorical. However, it is significant that Josephus (*Ant.* 4.8.21 §23) and Philo (*De Virt.* 27.145) regarded such a specific injunction as being for the welfare of the

animals concerned. (This passage will be examined in detail in Excursus Two following this chapter.)

Hebrew scripture gave rise to two important principles relating to animals. One of these principles was that of *ṣa'ar ba'alê ḥayyim* (lit. 'the pain of living things') which meant the avoidance of animal suffering. Although this was a rabbinic concept, it was derived from passages such as Exodus 23:4-5 and Deuteronomy 22:1-4 which deal with lost and over-laden animals. The second of these two concepts was that of the 'righteous man' or *ṣadiq* which was applied to those who 'practise charity' to animals as well as to people. The term was applied specifically to Noah and to Joseph but was also found in 'a righteous man has regard for the life of his beast' (Prov 12:10). Here there was a double obligation - of concern for the welfare of the working animal *per se* and of righteousness to God. Thus, although the rabbinic writings belonged to the fourth century CE, they were derived from principles that had been put into practice much earlier.

As we saw when we surveyed a brief selection of pertinent Graeco-Roman texts, there were varying attitudes in relation to working animals. Although, as in the case of R. Gamaliel, there were some exceptions to the general rule (*b. Šabb.* 154b), it was probable that followers of mainstream Judaic thought were more likely to have taken a positive humanitarian view towards working animals.

The second question was 'How is Jesus portrayed in relation to the prevailing attitudes?' In the argument attributed to Jesus, it is taken for granted that the animal

would be removed from the pit. Here, as elsewhere, there is a *qal wahomer* argument that starts from an *accepted* given. The animal is removed from the pit on the Sabbath, therefore a human being should also be helped whether the situation is life-threatening or not. Here it is noteworthy that, in the argument attributed to Jesus, the animal is actually rescued. Had the underlying reasoning been of economic necessity only, then the owner could simply have lowered food and water to the casualty and removed it from the pit the following day, since the animal would not have been working on the Sabbath in any case. The rescue of the casualty suggests that 'an avoidance of animal suffering' was the principle upheld here. Concern for the welfare of an animal overrides Sabbath observance as surely as the concern for the welfare of a human being in the arguments attributed to Jesus. Thus Jesus is portrayed as taking the most positive of the possible attitudes to domestic animals. Although it cannot be proved incontestably that some of the sayings attributed to Jesus were in fact uttered by him, it is surely significant that he was perceived by his followers as having compassion for the animals that shared the lives of the ordinary people of Galilee and Judaea. In the next chapter, there is a possibility that Jesus was portrayed as showing concern for an individual animal temporarily in his care.

Endnotes: The Animal in the Pit

[1]Because of a textual difficulty (of the second *mqwm* in the text not being part of a construct relationship), the Cairene Text (CD11:16-17) gave rise to three possible interpretations (a) permission to carry life saving utensils (b) the prohibition of the above (c) their use only if there is no alternative. See Doering (1997, 265) for a full discussion of the textual difficulty and the use of fragment 4Q271 3i11 in resolving it.

[2]For instances of εἷς as the indefinite article see BDF §247.2.

[3]The respective witnesses are: 1. υιος η βους (p^{45} p^{75}(A) B W M e f q $sy^{p.h}$ sa.) 2. ονος η βους (K L Ψ f1 f13 33. 579.892. 1241. 2542 *al* lat bo / βους η ονος (sy^{s}). 3. υιος η βους η ονος (sy^{c})/ ονος υιος η βους (Θ). 4. προβατον (D d). 5. προβατον η βους (e a). (The reading at 5. is listed in American and British Committees of the I.G.N.T. Project 1983-7, Part 2, p. 20). This committee chose reading 2. ονος η βους (my own choice).

[4]The tradition of the ox and ass at the nativity, which is not found in the canonical gospels, was derived from Isaiah 1:3 and goes back to the time (186-254CE) of Origen (Glasson 1954, 13, cf. Linzey and Cohn-Sherbok 1997, 62, 85 n.2). Later, in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, Habakkuk 3:2 is also quoted with reference to the two animals at Bethlehem: this eighth century work is possibly the earliest reference to Habakkuk 3:2 in this connection (*pace* Michel 1967, 287).

[5]It may be argued that the witnesses for 1. (child and ox) provide a stronger case. However, the reading at 2. does explain the other variants, if the likely Aramaic original of beast(ox)/well is kept in mind together with the traditional association of the ass and the ox.

[6]The third and least important beast of burden featured in the Synoptic Gospels is the camel or dromedary (*Camelus dromedarius*), Cansdale 1970, 66). It is mentioned in the saying 'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God' (Luke 18:25; Matt 19:24; Mark 10:25). Here the reference is to the size of the animal with 'baggage four foot above and four foot on either side of the camel' (Danby 1993, 368 n5). See also Hooker (1991, 243) for discussion on 'rationalisations' of the passage (cf. also *b. Ber.* 55b).

The only other reference is in Matthew 23:24 'to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel'. This may be redactional (so Gundry 1982, 464) or a possible word play in Aramaic on *qalmā* 'gnat' and *qamlā* 'camel' (Black 1967, 175-6). In either case the illustration is of the type of controversy which portrays concern for minor legal detail as moral myopia. Both sayings relate to the size of the camel only.

[7]See under μύλος 2. millstone (BAGD 1979, 529) and Derrett (1985, 227 n.5). A illustration of such a stone at Qumran may be found in Vaux (1961, pl. 20b). Vaux describes the two large basalt millstones which were found near the mill itself (1961, 22 and pl.20a).

[8]Apuleius paints a grim picture of sickly mules and worn out horses which like the ill-used donkey laboured at the mill (*Metamorphoses* 9.11-13).

[9]Donner cites H.Guthe *Palästina* (2nd ed. 1927, 79). I have not been able to obtain this book.

[10]The section of Proverbs containing chapters 10-15 probably dates from around 300 BCE, but some existed separately before then, possibly as oral aphorisms (Toy, 1899, xxvi).

Excursus Two: The Influence of Torah.

In order to understand how Torah may have influenced attitudes to animals and to try to ascertain, in particular, if it advocated a humane attitude, we will examine one representative text: 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain' (Deut 25:4). This text was chosen partly as a representative of similar texts (such as Deuteronomy 22:10: 'You shall not plough with an ox and ass together), which appear to show a humane attitude to domestic animals in the Hebrew Bible. Deuteronomy 25:4 was chosen also as Paul refers to it in the New Testament (1 Cor 9:9b-10). Since the thesis is dealing with the New Testament and not Hebrew Scripture *per se*, this section is placed in an excursus rather than in a separate chapter.

Interpretations of the Text

Because the injunction follows a list of punishments (Deut 25:1-3) and comes before a section on Levirate marriage (Deut 25:5-10), some have argued for an allegorical interpretation (Carmichael 1974, 238; 1985, 294-296; Noonan 1980, 173-5). Carmichael suggests that the text is an allusion to Levirate marriage in proverbial form: just as 'an ox should not be denied its due portion from the work of its treading' so an Israelite should not be denied his portion in the land (which he would be if he died childless; cf. Ruth 4:10). Therefore Levirate marriage ruled that the brother of the dead childless man should marry his widow and so perpetuate the dead man's name. Noonan sees the injunction as an allegory of Genesis 38:5;10 and the story of Onan who refused to raise issue for his brother. Carmichael extended his

Levirate theory to include this in his later work on Deuteronomy (1985, 295). Although this theory is ingenious, it seems over-subtle: when the following verses are explicit, what need is there of allegory? However, there is another explanation for the odd juxtaposition of topics in Deuteronomy.

Noting the presence of order by topic in some parts of Deuteronomy and the lack of such order in other parts, Tigay suggests: '... it was also considered acceptable to arrange laws by the association of topics and of features such as a shared idea or theme, a word, a phrase or a formula.' (1996, 451). He argues that similar arrangements may be found in other ancient writings such as the Laws of Hammurabi, and cites the shared formula in the Mishnah *Megillah* 1:5-11: 'There is no difference between A and B except ...' (1996, 451). The lack of a parashah division between v3 and v4 in Deuteronomy 25 suggests 'a strong thematic connection between the verses' (Tigay 1996, 535 n.62)[1]. With regard to Deuteronomy 25:4 and its context, Tigay (1996, 458) moves that the association is 'beating': the olives (Deut 24:20), the criminals (Deut 25:2-3) and the ox (Deut 25:4), which is an unfortunate association of ideas. If beating is the connection, then the suggestion that it is the ox that is doing the beating (the striking of the animal's hooves on the grain) seems nearer the mark (Rofé, 1988, 275-76). While the idea of Rofé's is possible, it must be said in any case that the verbs for 'beating' used in the three texts are from different roots[2]. According to Tigay (1996, 535, n.62), it was Abravanel[3] who first suggested that the thematic link between Deuteronomy 25: 3 and 4 is compassion towards the criminal (the limit to the number of stripes) and towards the threshing ox (in allowing it to eat while it works). Kaufman takes the

theme of 'fairness to one's fellow as regards both his substance and his dignity' as linking Deuteronomy 24:8 - 25:4 inclusively (1978-9, 141)[4]. The idea of having consideration towards others seems the most feasible suggestion (but see note 1 above).

There is a reference to Deuteronomy 25:4 in the Temple Scroll (11QT 52:12). Since it is placed next to the injunction not to plough with an ox and ass together[5] (11QT 52:13), Schiffman argues that the idea of humane treatment was the link between the two texts and the reason that they were placed together (1997, 174, 178). One element in favour of Schiffman's suggestion is that the Temple Scroll (11QT 52:5-6) forbids killing pregnant animals or the mother and young together (cf. Deut 22:6; Lev 22:28): this injunction presumably gives some thought to the animals concerned. If Schiffman is correct in his interpretation, then the writer/redactor of the Temple Scroll had a more humane outlook than the writer/ redactor of the Damascus Document (which we looked at in connection with Matt 12:11; Luke 14:5 in the last chapter). If Doering is correct in his reading of CD 11:16-17, even a human being falling into a pit would not have had a ladder or rope offered on the Sabbath, if the person had been unable to climb out with the assistance solely of a helper's outstretched hand (1997, 265)[6]. However, as Doering has also shown in the fragment (4Q265 7i6-7) it was permissible to hold out an upper garment for the person in the pit to grasp (but not a ladder or rope or other utensil which were not allowed to be carried on the Sabbath [*m. Šabb.* 7.2]). We tend to consider the adoption of humanitarian ideas as a sign of progress in any culture or civilisation, yet the Temple Scroll may have been the older writing of the two (Vermes 1995, 152).

Whatever the 'original' reason for the injunction, animals were unlikely to be muzzled in practice, in spite of Carmichael's argument to the contrary. In antiquity oxen, whether in ancient Greece (Homer *Iliad* 20.495-7) or ancient Egypt (Pritchard 1954, 122), were not normally muzzled when threshing[7]. Indeed later exegesis interpreted the text as prohibiting the muzzling of any animal where it could eat food which was already harvested, during its work (*Sifre Deut.* 287; *t. B. Meṣ.* 8:4-7). Instances into modern times of animals in the Middle East working without muzzles, have been described by Driver (1902, 280) and Dalman (1928-42, 3:104). Thus the injunction was interpreted literally. To keep the animal from eating too much of the grain intended for human consumption, it was given straw to eat first, especially by someone who had hired it (*t. B. Meṣ.* 8.4.387)[8].

The Allusion in 1 Corinthians 9:9b-10a

Even though the injunction is adhered to in practice, Paul asks 'Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake?' (1 Cor 9:9b-10a). According to Brewer, Paul's questions regarding the interpretation of Deuteronomy 25:4, have been taken in general to mean that he treated the text as allegory (1992, 554). Barrett does not see Paul's interpretation as an *a minori ad maius* argument that God cares for oxen but even more for people. 'Paul meant that the command was given in order to support the true principle that the workman (including the apostle) should reap some reward for his labour' (Barrett 1971, 206). However, Brewer argues that Paul did understand the text literally but believed that the Law was given for the benefit of man (the ox's benefit was incidental). Brewer maintains that the law, although to be interpreted literally, was for the benefit of people who would receive a blessing for

keeping God's ordinances: '...the whole Law is given for man to obey, and to receive blessing through that obedience... the blessing of knowing that they had obeyed God' (1992, 557). As Brewer indicates, this type of reasoning was certainly to be found later among some of the Rabbis: 'If a man said (in his prayer): "To a bird's nest do thy mercies extend" (cf. Deut 2:7)...they put him to silence' (*m. Ber.* 5.3; *m. Meg.* 4.9). ...'because he presents the measures taken by the Holy One... as springing from compassion, whereas they are but decrees' (*b. Ber.* 33b; cf. *y. Ber.* 5.3).

Philo appreciated that the law was given to people: 'The Law is not made for irrational beings, but for those that have mind and reason' (*De Specialibus legibus* 1.260). Yet he also realised that some laws were given on behalf of creatures which were not reckoned as having mind and reason: 'I have mentioned the kindly and beneficent regulation for the oxen while threshing' (*De Virtutibus* 27.145). Compelling as Brewer's arguments are, within the context of 1 Corinthians 9:1-11, where Paul is speaking of agricultural workers enjoying the fruits of their produce, it seems more likely that Paul interpreted Deuteronomy 25:4 as allegory, with the ox representing the worker in a strictly material sense. In this context at least, Paul did not regard the original text as being given for the literal benefit of oxen and the spiritual benefit of man. At any rate, *his* own concern was certainly not with oxen.

Conclusion

It may not be possible to determine exactly what was in the minds of the Deuteronomic writers when they wrote Deuteronomy 25:4. Whether it was intended literally and/or figuratively, the text was certainly understood to have been instituted

for humane reasons by Josephus (*Ant.* 4.8.21 §23) and Philo (*De Virtutibus* 27.145). By contrast, Paul appears to have taken the text strictly in an allegorical sense in the context of payment for those who worked for the church. That it was interpreted literally by the peasant farmers is reasonably certain. There were possible instances of neglect and careless treatment of working animals (just as there was oppression of the poor and the vulnerable of humanity). However, it does not mean that there was never any concern for working animals, or that every owner was only concerned with getting as much work out of the beasts with as little outlay as possible. Although beasts of burden were not pampered pets, it does not follow that their owners had no feelings towards their fellow workers. Whatever the original intentions of the Deuteronomic writers in writing such texts as 'You shall not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain', it is evident that the injunction was interpreted in a literal fashion and thus contributed to a humane attitude towards working animals among the Jewish people.

Endnotes: excursus two.

[1]However, in the Masoretic Text there is a *pisqot* division between verses 3 and 4, and between 4 and 5, effectively placing verse 4 on its own. For a comprehensive discussion of *parashot* and *pisqot* divisions see Yeivin (1980, 39-44).

[2]The three roots are: beating of the olive tree - *ḥbt* (Deut 24:20); flogging of the criminal - *nkh* (Deut 25:2-3); striking of the animal's hooves - *dwš* (Deut 25:4).

[3]Isaac Abravanel (Abarbanel) the fifteenth century commentator, suggested this in his *Commentarius Pentateuchum Mosis* .

[4]Kaufman's argument that there is a theme of 'fairness' which links Deuteronomy 24:28 - 25:4 is convincing. For the purposes of this thesis it is not necessary to accept his overall argument that the structure of the Deuteronomic Law (chaps. 12-26) and its major topical units followed the order of the Laws of the Decalogue (1979, 108-9).

[5]The injunction against the ox and ass ploughing together (Deut 22:10) may have been a prohibition of mixtures to reinforce the forbidding of mixed marriages, but that it was also humane to the weaker ass because of the different traction of the two animals was noted by Philo (*De Virtutibus* 27.146). It is also worthy of note that the Israelites used mules which are the hybrid offspring of the horse with the ass (2 Sam 18:9; 1 Kgs 1:38; Ezra 2:66). Thus the Israelites did not always avoid cross-breeding or at least making use of cross-bred animals (*pace* Schochet 1984, 69-70).

[6]Because of a textual difficulty (of the second *mqwm* in the text not being part of a construct relationship), the Cairene Text (CD11:16-17) gave rise to three possible interpretations (a) permission to carry life saving utensils (b) the prohibition of the above (c) their use only if there is no alternative.

[7]Cf. Cato (*De Agricultura* 54.9) where the ox when ploughing is muzzled to keep it from going after the grass. Cato, however, was hardly the most generous of owners either of cattle or slaves (Plutarch *Life of Cato* 5.6).

[8]Straw was part of the animal's diet. A human parallel was the giving of weak wine by vineyard owners to the workers to keep them from eating too many of the grapes at harvest (*t.B.Meṣ.* 8.3). Food was often part of a labourer's wage *(m. B.Meṣ.*7.1; cf. 9.12).

7. The Palm Sunday Colt

In the traditional picture of the entry into Jerusalem, Jesus rides on a colt or πῶλος (Mark 11:2; Luke 19:35): the understanding that it is the colt of an ass is made explicit in Matthew 21:2-7, where the mother of the animal is also mentioned. This is the one canonical instance of Jesus being depicted as having direct contact with a living animal. What does the Synoptic tradition tell us about the way in which Jesus was perceived with regard to an animal that was temporarily, at least, in his care? What were the reasons for the choice of the animal? Was it in fact an ass's colt that had not been ridden previously? Here we will look at the questions in reverse order.

The Identity of the Mount[1]

Bauer argued that the animal in question was a horse (1953, 220-229). The first part of his argument states that πῶλος in classical Greek began as a designation for a young animal, then was limited to the young horse and then finally arrived at the meaning horse 'pure and simple' (1953, 226): this section with regard to classical Greek is well thought out and demonstrated, but the same cannot be said for his approach to the use of πῶλος in the LXX. He maintains (p.227) that in Genesis 49:11 the word πῶλος is used in both senses: 'he tethers to the vine his horse (τὸν πῶλον αὐτοῦ) and to the branch the young of his she-ass' (τὸν πῶλον τῆς ὄνου αὐτοῦ). However, it seems more likely that the LXX is using πῶλος as 'colt' (i.e. an ass's colt) in both phrases as an instance of poetic parallelism. In the Masoretic Text *'îrōh* ('his young male ass') comes in the first phrase, and *b^{e}nî ʾ^{a}tōnô* (the 'young of his she-ass') in the second: here also there is poetic parallelism, indeed

synonymous parallelism (Westermann 1984-7, 3:231; Geller 1979, 64)[2]. Moreover, *'ayir* is never used of a horse in the Masoretic Text. Derrett comments that πῶλος in Zechariah 9:9 (LXX) is obviously used in the sense of 'ass's colt' and therefore Bauer is contradicted (1971, 248 n.1): while this is an appropriate answer to Bauer in the context of Matthew 21:5d,7, it is less effective with regard to Mark 11:2-7 where there is no *explicit* mention of Zechariah 9:9. (The phrase 'on which no one has ever yet sat' may be an oblique reference to the 'new colt' [Zech. 9:9 LXX]). However, Derrett is correct in saying that the animal which the disciples brought to Jesus would be an ass, as it was unlikely that a valuable horse would be left unattended (1971, 248). Moreover, the horse had a different symbolic significance from the ass (see below).

Menken argues that the two animals in Matthew 21:2-7 were suggested by the story of Ziba offering King David a couple of asses to ride on near the summit of the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 16:1-4 (1992, 574). However, it has been demonstrated by Fitzmyer that the two animals in Matthew's version was probably due to Matthew's interpretation of the Septuagintal version of Zechariah 9:9 where poetic parallelism referring to one animal (so also in the Masoretic Text) was taken by Matthew to refer to two animals (1981-5, 2:1248), so also Michel (1968, 960; 1967 286). This interpretation has been questioned by Davies and Allison who, drawing upon Rabbinic references (1988-97, 1:28), conclude that '...Matthew, just like the later rabbis, read Zech 9.9 in the light of Exod 4.19-20, so that it was natural... to find two animals in the ambiguous LXX Zech 9.9' (1988-97, 3:121). It should be noted here, however, that Rabbinic references to the ass in connection with

the Messiah and Zechariah 9:9 are late (mainly from the fourth century Babylonian Talmud and *Genesis Rabbah*), and that there is no mention of Zechariah 9:9 in the Pseudepigrapha (Billerbeck 1956, 1:842). In addition, the said Rabbinic references may well have no direct relevance to a first century Christian text.

Frenz suggests that Jesus rode the mother and that the colt ran alongside (1971, 259-60): 'for it is impossible that an unbroken and (at least according to John) not weaned colt should be used in a procession'[3]. However, here, Frenz is visualising a foal rather than a colt. A foal is the unweaned animal up to the age of six months. A young ass colt (or filly in the case of the female) would probably be used as a pack animal before it was ridden. The gentle walking pace of a procession would not put any undue strain on an colt being ridden for the first time, although the steep descent from the villages to Jerusalem would not have been easy even for an animal which was used to being ridden[4]. Moreover, the docile donkey is not 'broken in' in the way that a horse is, but is accustomed to being led first[5]. It seems probable that the picture described in the Gospels is that of Jesus on a donkey colt which was just old enough to be ridden. Thus the traditional translation of πῶλος as the colt of an ass is justified on both linguistic and practical grounds.

The Symbolism of the Entry

Bultmann dismisses the entry into Jerusalem on an animal as 'a fairy tale motif' (1968, 261-2). Marshall concedes that some aspects seem to be legendary, but rightly maintains that there could be a historical basis for the narrative (1978, 710). The ass was certainly the usual riding animal of the Jewish people: however, as Davies and

Allison point out, normally pilgrims would enter the city on foot (1989-97, 3:123). The possibility that an entry by Jesus into Jerusalem on an ass, with the acclamation of people waving palm branches, may relate to the Feast of Tabernacles or to the Dedication rather than to Passover is discussed by Mastin: he concludes that 'the nationalistic background' of the Dedication is 'far more suitable as the inspiration for the behaviour of the crowd at the Triumphal entry' (1969-70, 82; cf. Manson 1951, 271-82). Whether or not such an entry into Jerusalem belongs rightly to an incident connected with another religious feast cannot now be proved, but tradition in the shape of the evangelists' writing has irrevocably linked the entry to Passover. Although tradition does not necessarily imply historicity, it certainly does not negate it.

If there was any symbolism involved in the depiction of Jesus electing to enter Jerusalem on an ass, it must surely be that the ass was chosen as a sign of peace. The horse had long been considered a status symbol associated with war (Josh 11:4; 1 Kgs 10:26; Esther 6:7-11). The suggestion, first mooted by Eisler (1931, 471-73, 480-81) that Jesus was seen as having revolutionary intentions has rightly had little support. The ethos of the teaching of 'the Sermon on the Mount' (Matt 5:1-48) is hardly that of someone leading '...a band of secretly armed followers to issue in Jerusalem a summons to freedom....' as Eisler argues (1931, 480)[6]. Moreover as Hooker points out there was no reference to any triumphal entry at the trial of Jesus, where 'it would have provided useful evidence for the prosecution.' (1991, 256).

Brandon more cautiously suggests an 'attack on the authority of the Jewish sacerdotal aristocracy' (1967, 338). However, the Synoptic Jesus is not normally depicted as attacking the priestly system *per se*[7]. He is usually seen as debating instances of Pharisaic interpretation of the law, where there seems to have been a leaning towards a minor point of observance over a more important one (as we saw with the Sabbath healing controversy). Tatum is possibly nearer the mark when he suggests that the entry as it is depicted was making 'a statement about God's rule over against Caesar's rule' (1998, 141)[8]

All four Gospels refer to Jesus being acclaimed as 'king' at the entry to Jerusalem. The Synoptic Gospels depict Jesus as having foreknowledge of the animal's whereabouts. The Johannine version has Jesus finding the colt after his acclamation by the crowd, which may have been a deliberate reversal by John to show Jesus as accepting the title 'king' as a king of peace only (Brown 1966-70, 2:459; Lindars 1972, 423): Barrett accepts this with caution (1976, 416). Coakley argues that Jesus was in fact coerced into riding the animal by 'enthusiastic followers', a reading which he concedes does not follow the usual picture of Jesus as being in control of events (1995, 479). This does not seem very likely. What is certain is that Jesus was portrayed as a Messianic king 'humble and riding on an ass...'

The Perceived Attitude of Jesus to the Colt

Mark describes Jesus as promising to return the colt (11:3). Derrett argues that this is to emphasise that Jesus was borrowing, not hiring:'...it is necessary that the purpose should be indicated and the expected duration, for after the duration has expired, it

becomes a hire' (1971, 252). Derrett may be right in his interpretation of the Marcan version as depicting both ἀγγαρεία, or impressment, and a borrowing consistent with Jewish law (1971, 249). Thus, in the Marcan detail of the promise to return the animal, it may be accepted that part of the intention was that the animal should rightly be returned to its owner as a piece of property. Yet it is also likely that the intention was that the animal itself should not become lost and neglected in the tumult of a crowded city, where it might have had difficulty in finding fodder and water. If this interpretation is correct (and to my knowledge it has not been found elsewhere) then it is an instance of practical concern for the individual animal that has been attributed to Jesus. As we have already seen in the instances of the lost sheep and the animal in the pit, Jesus is depicted as speaking of the concern of others for the individual animal: here it is Jesus himself who is depicted as showing concern. This concern is consistent with the principle of *ṣa'ar ba'alê ḥayyim* 'the avoidance of animal suffering'.

The detail of the return of the animal is not found in the Lukan account (19:28-40). Kinman (1999, 287) suggests that Luke deliberately omitted the detail in Mark of the promise to return the colt in order to emphasise the 'royal prerogative' of Jesus. The promise of Mark 11:3 that Jesus will send back the colt, becomes prediction in Matthew 21:3 that the owner will send the animals. (Matthew also changes the tense from present to future.) In Mark, Jesus is the subject of καὶ εὐθὺς αὐτὸν ἀποστέλλει πάλιν ὧδε[9]. In Matthew it is the owner who is the subject of εὐθὺς δὲ ἀποστελεῖ αὐτούς. While Hagner may be correct in his assumption that this change of subject in Matthew is to indicate that Jesus had foreknowledge of

what would happen, Hagner has unfortunately confused the issue somewhat. After clearly explaining the situation: 'That is, the disciples will immediately find the two animals, and when they are challenged in taking them, their explanation will be accepted and their owner will send them εὐθὺς, "immediately"', Hagner then continues: 'This alteration of Mark so that Jesus is the subject of the verb strengthens the notion of divine control in the whole affair (contrast Mark 11:3)' (1993-5, 2: 593). The point is that Jesus is *not* the subject of the verb 'he will send' in Matthew, but that Matthew has changed the subject to the owner, for his own redactional purposes.

Although it does not appear in the Canonical Gospels, there is a story preserved in the Coptic that describes how Jesus showed compassion towards an animal.

It happened that the Lord left the city and walked with his disciples over the mountains. And they came to a mountain, and the road which led up it was steep. There they found a man with a pack mule. But the animal had fallen, because the man had loaded it too heavily, and now he beat it, so that it was bleeding. And Jesus came to him and said, 'Man, why do you beat your animal? Do you not see that it is too weak for its burden, and do you not know that it suffers pains?' But the man answered and said, 'What is that to you? I may beat it as much as I please, since it is my property, and I bought it for a good sum of money. Ask those who are with you, for they know me and know about this.' And some of the disciples said, 'Yes, Lord, it is as he says. We have seen how he bought it.' But the Lord said, 'Do you then not see how it bleeds, and do you not hear how it groans and cries out?' But they answered and said, 'No. Lord, that it groans and cries out, we do not hear.' But Jesus

was sad and exclaimed, 'Woe to you, that you do not hear how it complains to the Creator in heaven and cries out for mercy. But threefold woes to him about whom it cries out and complains in its pain.' And he came up and touched the animal. And it stood up and its wounds were healed. But Jesus said to the man, 'Now carry on and from now on do not beat it any more, so that you too may find mercy.' [10]

Although it is not possible to say whether or not the above story goes back to an early Gospel tradition, it does reflect the commandment to help when an animal has fallen under its burden (Exod 23:4; Deut 22:4). For the interpretation that the animal is also to be helped see Josephus (*Ant.* 4.30 §275) and the Rabbinic interpretations (*b. B.Meṣ.* 31a-32b; *b. Sanh.* 128b). As Bauckham clearly points out: 'So the story may go back to a Jewish-Christian source in which Jesus' teaching that love is the overriding principle in interpreting the law was extended as it is not explicitly in the canonical Gospels, to animals as well as people' (1998a, 39). Moreover, unlike most Apocryphal stories concerning animals, there are no fantastic features, the mule does not speak: it is Jesus alone who understands the animal's distress as a cry for help (cf. *Acts of Thom.* 39-41, 74, 78-9).

As we saw in the chapter on 'the animal in the pit', the principle of the 'avoidance of animal suffering' derived from passages in Torah was observed in practice. This story of the healing of the mule, like the detail of the speedy return of the colt, also shows Jesus in the light of the 'righteous person' or *ṣadiq* who extends compassion to animals as well as to people (Prov 12:10). In Hebrew scripture the people who merited the title were Noah (Gen 8:14-16) and Jacob (Gen 33:13-14). Rebecca, also,

is worthy of mention as she drew water for the camels as well as for Abraham's servant (Gen 24:14,19). Thus by implication at least, in the Markan promise that he would return the colt immediately, Jesus is perceived as following in this tradition.

Conclusion

The first concern was the identity of the animal at the entry into Jerusalem. Matthew has stated explicitly that the animals were 'an ass and the colt of an ass' (Matt 21:2-7). In Mark 11:2 and in Luke 19:35, the animal is a πῶλος, traditionally translated as 'colt'. After looking at the argument that the animal in question was a horse, we decided that it was not a horse for several reasons. Firstly, the horse was traditionally associated with war and, as we saw when looking at the symbolism of the entry, the whole ethos of the entry was one of peace. Next, such a valuable animal would not have been left unattended. Finally, on linguistic grounds, the attempt to argue that πῶλος was a 'horse' failed because the passages cited from LXX (Gen 49:11) in defence of the argument are of poetic parallelism and refer to the colt of an ass. Nor was the animal an unweaned donkey foal as such an animal would have been too small for an adult person to ride. A donkey colt that had not been ridden previously may well have been used first as a pack animal, since it was the custom to use donkeys first in this way. At any rate the animal depicted in the Gospel accounts of the entry was most likely a young donkey just old enough to be ridden for the first time. That this choice of mount had symbolic significance was evident in all the accounts of the entry.

The next issue was the reasons for the choice of the animal and the symbolism of the entry. Mathew has drawn parallels with Zechariah 9:9 and painted the picture of a messianic king coming in peace. Although neither Luke nor Mark refer explicitly to Zechariah 9:9, there may be an allusion to this passage (i.e. 'the new colt') in their respective references to the colt as one 'on which no one has yet sat' Luke 19:35; Mark 11:2). At any rate again the idea must surely be of an entry in peace, since the ethos of the 'Sermon on the Mount' is hardly compatible with a plan for an armed revolutionary attack. Elsewhere in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' teaching there are certainly references to controversy but these are normally dealing with Pharisaic interpretation of the law. Such controversy is usually shown in a case where there seems to have been a leaning towards a minor point of observance of the law over a more important issue such as healing (as we saw in the Sabbath healing controversy). As we will see in the story of the fig-tree, there is condemnation of the priestly cultus *per se* but this is not normally associated with Jesus.

The final question of how Jesus is perceived in relation to the colt is an important one since this is the only canonical instance of Jesus' contact with a living animal. The promise in Mark 11:3 that the ass's colt was to be returned 'immediately' may certainly be construed as a promise to return a piece of property out of consideration for the owner. Yet it may also indicate an attitude of concern for an individual animal that might otherwise become lost in a crowded city and suffer distress through lack of access to fodder and water. Matthew appears to have changed the subject of the 'sending' of the colt, from Jesus to the owner to portray prescience on the part of Jesus (Matt 21:3). Thus the promise as shown in Mark that Jesus will send back the

colt is depicted as prescience in Matthew that Jesus knows the owner will send it in the first instance. Strangely, this detail is not found in Luke, who may have left it out to emphasise Jesus' right to the animal.

However, the promise to return the colt is also consistent with the principle of 'the avoidance of animal suffering'. As we have seen, other texts have indicated that Jesus was perceived as regarding the individual animal as being of importance (for example 'the lost sheep' [Luke 15:4-57// Matt 18:12-14] and 'the animal in the pit' [Matt 12:11// Luke 14:5]). Here it is Jesus himself who is perceived as having regard for an individual animal. Thus following in the tradition of Noah and Jacob, Jesus is shown as the 'righteous person' who has compassion for animals as well as for people.

At least by implication, Jesus is shown as having an attitude of concern for the welfare of domestic animals (which also overrides Sabbatical observance) in all three Synoptic Gospels. Such concern was not unique as it was found earlier in Hebrew Scripture (for example, Proverbs 12:10) and was part of a continuing tradition, noted by Philo (*De Virtutibus* 27.145) and Josephus (*Ant.* 4.8.21 §23) and discussed in later Rabbinic Literature (*Sifre Deut.* 287; *t.B.Meṣ.* 8.4-7). This type of concern was also found in individual people such as Plutarch in the Graeco-Roman world.

Endnotes: The Palm Sunday Colt

[1]Background information on the domestication of the donkey may be found in the previous chapter.

[2]Speiser (1969, 366) and Geller (1979, 64) follow Noth (1957, 144) in translating *'ayir* as 'donkey' (that is a fully grown animal, not a colt): both Speiser and Geller translate *b^{e}nî $^{'a}$tōnô* as 'purebred'.

[3]ὀνάριον 'little donkey' in John 12:14 is a diminutive in form only. According to Bauer in the Johannine context it would be a young donkey i.e. not a 'foal' (1970, 570).

[4]Donkeys like horses are not fully mature until they are about six years old. In modern times legislation is set out that no donkey (mule or horse) should be hired out for riding before the age of three (Riding Establishments Act 1964 s6 (4) in *Halsbury's Laws of England* 4th ed. Vol.2: 192, paragraph 395 (1). A donkey, when it is about two and a half, may be ridden by a child (De Wesselow 1967, 99). Ideally even an adult donkey should not be carrying more than 50kgs (8st.) according to A. K. Chapman (1997, 272): but in third world countries today donkeys carry adults of 70kgs and more (Starkey 1997, 184). There was of course no such legislation in force in the Ancient Near East, nevertheless, donkeys had been domesticated for the previous three thousand years and people must have had a rough idea of the age and size an animal would need to attain before it was ridden. It would certainly not be a foal (*pace* Marshall 1978, 713-4).

[5]The cloaks on the back(s) of the animal(s), (Matt 21:7, Mark 11:7. Luke 19:35) were to act as a saddle (Marshall 1978, 714). They may also have been used in this way as an act of homage, for the same reason that garments were strewn on the ground (2 Kgs 9:13).

[6]There is a suggestion by Duff that Mark used the literary motif of irony in building a picture of a triumphal entry, such as was implied in Zechariah 14 and similar to those of kings and victorious generals in the Graeco-Roman world. The irony of course was that reality in the shape of coming events would prove to be different from the reader's expectation (1992, 55-71).

[7]See chapter nine on the cursing of the fig-tree , where there *is* a likely condemnation of the priestly cultus.

[8]While there would certainly be a contrast between a Roman ceremonial processional entry and Jesus' entry on an ass into Jerusalem, Tatum goes too far in suggesting that (intentionally or not) 'Jesus was using an ass to make an ass out of Pilate and the Romans' (1998, 141).

[9]As Hooker points out, the manuscripts which omit παλιν are probably secondary (1991, 259).

[10]This is a translation by Bauckham (1998, 38-39) of Boehmer's German version of a story preserved 'in the Coptic Bible' (1903, 26-7). The only information Boehmer had (which he had obtained from an earlier writer) was that the story had been preserved in a manuscript in the Paris Library: search there however proved unsuccessful (Dunkerley 1957, 143-4). There is another English translation in the style of the AV

in Pick (1908, 58-59). Although finding the manuscript would not verify the historicity of the story, it would at least show the location and context of the story in 'the Coptic Bible'. This would be an interesting task for a scholar with a knowledge of Coptic.

8. The Forgotten Sparrow

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God (Luke 12:6).

What are we to understand from the phrase 'And not one of them is forgotten before God?' in Luke 12:6; and from the parallel 'and not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will?' in Matthew 10:29? Do the two variants show a marked difference in attitude to the sparrows themselves? The context is one of persecution and martyrdom: does this refer to a post-Easter situation only? It is a sad irony that the sparrows, who were 'not forgotten before God', have been forgotten by several commentators who do not even mention them when discussing the passage (for example, Caird 1963, 160-1; Leaney 1966, 198; Sabourin 1987, 246). Even in the later major commentaries, any reference to the sparrows is often relegated to the footnotes (for example in Fitzmyer 1981-5, 2: 960 n.6). Therefore, first of all, we will look at the sparrows themselves and how they were regarded generally.

Meaning and Identity of στρουθίον

According to Bauernfeind (1971, 730 n.5), the word στρουθίον, the diminutive of στρουθός , can be a generic name for any small bird of the passerine order: a modern parallel would be the German 'fink' which means chaffinch, but which can also refer to any small singing bird[1]. Like the other variants, στρουθάριον and στρουθίς, στρουθίον may have come from the word τρίζω 'to twitter', but the etymology is uncertain (Bauernfeind 1971, 730 n.3). As Jesus was likely to have

been speaking in Aramaic, he probably used *ṣippar* which derived from the Hebrew *ṣippôr* and has a similar range of meaning. Bauernfeind (1971, 731) states that *ṣippôr* 'merely denotes "birds" in general or an individual bird, but nowhere is there anything to suggest a sparrow'. However, Driver (1955b, 130-1) shows that when *ṣippôr* appears on its own, it is *primarily* a generic term for any small bird of the passerine order, but when parallel to or contrasted with another specific bird, for example the swallow (Ps 84:3) or the dove (Hos 11:11) it probably refers to the sparrow, 'since the corresponding words in the cognate languages denote also this bird'[2].

However, στρουθίον is generally translated as sparrow (*Passer domesticus biblicus*) which, as the most common bird in the country, forms large flocks in the autumn, when they are likely to cause damage in fields, plantations and orchards (Bodenheimer 1935, 134, 156; Paz 1987, 239). 'The cock sparrow has a grey crown, chestnut-brown upperparts streaked with black, white cheeks and black throat. The hen is duller, and has no grey on her dull brown head, no white cheeks nor a black throat; her general colour is dull brown and buff. Both sexes have a slight wing-bar formed by some white on the median coverts' (Bannerman 1958, 26). Although the sparrow is perhaps not one of the most beautiful birds, nor is it a melodious singer, Stolz finds that it has nothing to commend it and calls it an 'impudent parasite' (1934, 56). This sparrow nests in the Western Wall of the Second Temple (Felicks 1981, 56) just as it did in the precincts of the First (Ps 84:3). It was also to be found at the temple of Apollo at Branchidae in Anatolia (*Herodotus* 1.59). However, the sparrow was not the only bird to nest at the Jerusalem Temple, as the swift (*Apus*

spp.) is also noted by Felicks (1981, 56) while Parmelee (1960, 162) suggests the wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes syriacus*) also may have done this in biblical times.

Στρουθός or στρουθίον features also as a pet bird both in Hebrew scripture and in classical literature[3]. In Job 40:29 LXX we find παίξῃ δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ ὥσπερ ὀρνέῳ; ἢ δήσεις αὐτόν ὥσπερ στρουθίον παίδιῳ; 'will you play with him as with a bird, or put him on a leash like a little bird for a child?' (my translation): here, the NEB translates στρουθίον generically as 'song-bird' in the corresponding passage (Job 41:5)[4]. Certainly, Lesbia's 'sparrow' in Catullus' poem 'Passer, deliciae meae puellae' (2.1.1) 'Sparrow, my lady's pet' was unlikely to have been the domestic sparrow. Thompson (1936, 191) suggests that, as a 'favourite cage bird', the blue rock thrush (*Petrocichla cyanus*) was the bird in question. Moreover, Tristram (1884, 31) is probably correct when he states that the blue rock thrush was likely to be the 'sparrow which sits alone on the house tops' (Ps 102:7) as it is a solitary bird, in its habits. Instances of στρουθίον in the Septuagint which are probably to be understood generically are: Psalm 10:1, Psalm 123:7, Ecclesiastes 12:4, Lamentations 3:52[5].

Sale of Small Birds in Antiquity

Selling small birds in groups seems to have been widespread in antiquity: for example Aristophanes, in speaking of Philocrates, says: 'he threads his chaffinchs on strings and sells them seven to the obol'[6] (*Aves* 1079). Parmelee (1960, 244) notes that the birds for sale in the market would include wheatears (*Oenanthe oenanthe*), goldfinches (*Carduelis niediecki*), crested larks (*Galeria spp.*), golden orioles

(*Oriolus oriolus*) and greenfinches (*Chloris chlorotica*): this forms only a small representative selection of the likely species which would be on sale. As sparrows and finches are seed-eaters, they were probably among the birds of Mark 4:4. In this parable, the 'birds' stand metaphorically for the 'evil one'. Although the birds are used in the parable to represent Satan or the evil one, their use is symbolic and it does not imply that the birds themselves are evil. Moreover, if seed fell on the path where it would be trodden upon and damaged, it was unlikely to germinate in any case. White (1964, 305-6) successfully refutes the idea mooted by Jeremias (1954, 301 n.1)[7] that the action of sowing on the path was deliberate, but demonstrates instead that the seed on the path was simply the result of sowing broadcast (i.e. scattering widely). Metaphorically and literally, the path was the wrong place.

In contrast to any damage done by seed-eating birds to crops, however, were the good offices of the insect-eaters such as the wheatears. The outstanding example of a bird, beneficial to people, was the rose-coloured starling (*Pastor roseus*). Tristram (1884, 73) describes a flock: 'In 1881 I came across marvellous flights of this bird in Northern Syria... near the ancient Larissa, in countless myriads, all travelling to the westward... The locusts were there, and on one occasion we rode over some acres alive with young locusts, which absolutely carpeted the whole surface. One of these flocks suddenly alighted, like a vast fan dropping on the earth and dappling it with black and pink. Soon they rose again. We returned and not a trace of a locust could we find.' In the modern Greek names for this bird can be found humanity's ambivalence towards the natural world: on its spring migration, when it destroys the

locusts the rose-coloured starling is called ἁγιοποῦλι and in autumn when it devours the grapes, it becomes διαβολοποῦλι (Thompson 1936, 259).

If the birds were indeed sparrows, they would hardly be sold as singing birds. The likelihood is that they were being sold as food. Although Marshall (1978, 514) says that sparrows were not sold as food, he gives no evidence to support this. Deissman (1927, 275) and Parmelee (1960, 244) depict two variations on the topic. The former pictures the birds in cages chirping noisily while some poor old woman counts out the necessary small coins: while the latter, more realistically, describes the small bodies with plumage dulled in death, lying lifeless on the vendor's table. Whichever view was right, the end result was the same.

The scene, then, is commonplace: small birds are offered for sale as cheap food in the market place, and are of no more account to the casual passer-by, than are the plucked corpses of chickens to a present day shopper in a supermarket. While to most modern minds the idea of tiny songbirds being trapped and killed for food seems unnecessary and perhaps even cruel, the same small songbirds lived out at least part of their normal lifespan, in a natural environment (unlike most of the chickens in today's supermarkets). In the context of the times, however, the small birds provided a cheap form of food for the poor, and were also slaughtered in their thousands to provide 'delicacies' for the rich (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 10.72). In conclusion, although the στρουθία may well have been sparrows, they could just as easily have been some other small birds, which were unfortunate enough to have been caught.

Comparison of the Parallel Texts

In comparing Luke 12:6 with the parallel Matthew 10:29, it is unlikely that any theological significance can be found in the difference between five birds being sold for two coins and two birds being sold for one: the point was that, to people, the birds were insignificant. While the Matthean version has two sparrows sold for a penny, Luke has five sold for two pennies, either because they came cheaper by the greater quantity (Deissman 1927, 273) or because the fifth was unsaleable (Parmelee 1960, 244). Goulder, who maintains Matthean priority, asserts that Luke changed Matthew's 'pair' of birds to 'a handful' (1989, 2:530) because Luke 'followed the natural tendency to count on his fingers' (1989, 1:104). However, as Luke uses other numbers such as seven in 2:36; 11:26 and 20:29, there seems no reason for such a change as Goulder suggests.(Goulder gives no comment on Luke's use of other numbers.) Moreover, Goulder is not always accurate: for example in the passage cited (1989, 1:104) he incorrectly refers to dinars in the episode of the sparrows (see n.1 in the excursus on coinage). Marshall (1978, 514) suggests that there were two forms of an oral tradition: this seems a more likely explanation and will be discussed later.

Although the numerical differences in the parallel passages have no real significance, the dissimilarities in the second half of each verse would appear to indicate that there may be a different perspective in each. Matthew 10:29b has καὶ ἓν ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐ πεσεῖται ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἄνευ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν 'and not one of them will fall to the ground without your father'.

Πεσεῖται ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ' will fall to the ground' , here Davies and Allison (1988-97, 2:208) leave open the possibility of a literal interpretation such as a nestling falling to the earth or a bird dropping dead in flight: they consider that it is also possibly a figurative way of speaking of death. Bonnard (1963, 152) simply regards the phrase as meaning 'to die'.

ἄνευ 'without', implies 'without the knowledge and consent of' (Bauer 1979, 65). Cook (1988, 138-9) however, maintains that there are three lexical possibilities for an understanding of ἄνευ: the first interpretation implying 'without the presence', Cook dismisses as ambiguous; the second interpretation 'without the consent' he discusses in detail, as he does the third possibility 'without the will or help'. Here Bonnard (1988, 139-42) sets out two clear alternatives:

1 As the sparrow falls to the ground by the will of God, so also do some of the listeners approach martyrdom by the will of God, but God is with them. (This interpretation is regarded by Cook as his sense three 'will and help').

2 Just as God's presence, his love, is with the sparrows so it will be with the listeners until their martyrdom. This death will not be willed by God. (This interpretation Cook regards as his sense one 'presence').

Though he concedes that the text does not say 'without the will of your father', Bonnard opts for his own first interpretation. Luz (1990-97, 2:128) also adopts this line: 'no single sparrow will become game without the will of God'. Cook also holds this view of the sparrow's dying by the active will of God. Davies and Allison (1988-97, 2:208), however, choose Cook's second sense 'knowledge and consent'. (Even

though they hold the interpretation of 'without your father's will' as being correct, they do not regard God as the cause of the sparrow's fall).

Early Christian authors also differed in their interpretation of ἄνευ. Origen stated that 'For though sparrows are sold as the Bible has it at two for a farthing "one does not fall into a snare against the will of the Father in heaven"' (*Con. Cel.* 8.70); there is an echo of Amos 3:5, in Origen's version. There is certainly a rabbinic parallel 'No bird perishes without God - how much less a man' (*p. Šebi* 9.38d)'. Two centuries later, John Chrysostom in discussing the passage, argued a different view: 'nevertheless, not even these will be caught without God's knowledge. For it does not mean, that they fall because of his action; for this is unworthy of God, but that nothing which is done is hidden from him' (*Hom. Mat.* 34.2). Though the commentators cited do not mention it, there is a resonance of acceptance of God's will in the Lord's prayer 'thy will be done' (Matt 6:10): however this is not found in Luke 11:2 (apart from some textual variants). The Passion narratives also contain this element in the Gethsemane scene (Luke 22:42; Matt 26:39).

Although Cook rightly says '...the context usually enables one to choose the correct sense of a word that has several possible senses', he criticises Bonnard for looking only at the context of Matthew 10:29-31 (1988, 143). However, when looking at the Gospel of Matthew as a whole, Cook finds references to God's will in the death of Jesus only. Cook admits that this does not necessarily mean that God willed the death of the martyrs. The point, which no one seems to make, is that if the sparrow falls and the martyr dies, there is no divine intervention to prevent the deaths: in this

respect it makes little difference which lexical interpretation is adopted. What does matter is that though the earthly lives of sparrow and martyr are over, they both still matter to God and are not 'forgotten'. Luz couples God's power over his creation with that over the community. 'God's power and God's love belong closely together: they bring about the fear of God and bring freedom from the fear of man': this harks back to Matthew 10:28 (1990-97, 2:129).

Πατήρ ἡμῶν - although this phrase is found three times only in Luke and once only in Mark, it appears no less than twenty times in Matthew (with twelve instances in chapter six alone). This may indicate Matthean redaction. Wellhausen (1914, 49) found the use of 'your father' as unnatural here as in 6:26: however, is it so unnatural? If the point being made is that God as the father of the disciples cares about his non-human creatures then, as the father of the disciples, he will care even more about them.

Luke 12:6 has καὶ ἕν ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιλελησμένον ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ .

Οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιλελησμένον ἐνῶπιον τοῦ θεοῦ - not forgotten before God. According to Fitzmyer (1981-5, 2:960) this means they were present to God's mind. 'Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you' (Isa 49:15b) and 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God' (Acts 10:31) give instances of this meaning both in Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament. This affirmation of divine remembering of the small is in stark contrast to

Cicero's 'The gods are careful about great things and neglect small ones' (*De Natura Deorum* 2.66.167).

ἐνώπιον is found only in Luke among the Gospels. This may be due to Lukan redaction of a Matthean original, but it may simply be due to Luke's fondness for Septuagintal Greek (see Fitzmyer 1981-5, 1:114). In other words, Luke may have had access to a different version of a Q saying from the parallel found in Matthew and changed it slightly, just as Matthew may have brought in 'your father' to the version, which he knew. Fitzmyer (1981-5, 2:956) states that Luke's fondness for the periphrastic tense (the verb 'to be' plus a participle) is a sign of Lukan redaction in 12:6b. However, in Luke 12:7 the verb is a simple perfect passive ἠρίθμηνται: yet in the corresponding passage in Matthew 10:29, there is a periphrastic tense, ἠριθμημέναι εἰσίν (the perfect passive participle plus the verb 'to be'), so Luke 12:6b cannot be dismissed so easily as Lukan redaction.

The Sparrows and Jesus

How is Jesus understood by Matthew and Luke in relation to the sparrows? Other instances in which he is portrayed as referring to birds include Mark 4:4 which we looked at earlier in the chapter, but here it is sufficient to say that this particular reference is symbolic. The verse on the vultures or eagles (Matt 24:28) which is discussed in chapter two, is also an observation of wild creatures used figuratively: but as we have seen, the vultures/eagles saying was likely to have been a proverb. The references to the birds of heaven (Matt 6:26) and the ravens (Luke 12:24) will be discussed fully in another chapter: these verses give more detailed assurances of

providential care. However, perhaps the most revealing reference is the tender yet homely image of the mother hen protectively gathering her chicks under her wings, in which Jesus is portrayed as referring to himself (Luke 13:34). This image is found in a literal sense in the Graeco-Roman world in the poem of the self-sacrificing mother hen: 'A domestic hen, the winter snowflakes falling thick on her, gathered her chickens safely bedded under her wings till the cold shower from the sky killed her; for she remained exposed, fighting against the clouds of heaven'28 (Alpheius of Mitylene *Anthologia Graeca* 95).

Both Matthew and Luke knew that Jesus was probably aware of oral traditions, which were later gathered into the Mishnah: one such was *m. Meg.* 4.9 '...to a bird's nest do thy mercies extend'. (This expression was regarded as doing less than justice to God as it was silenced 'because he [the speaker] makes the ordinances of God to be simply acts of mercy, whereas they are injunctions' *Gem.* 33b). The evangelists also appreciated that Jesus would certainly have known Deuteronomy 22:6-7, which gave rise to *m. Meg.* 4.9. They also knew that he would have been familiar with the great nature poems of Psalm 104 and Job 38-39, which also speak of God's care for the wild creatures. Although it cannot be proven, it seems more likely that Luke 12:6, with its stronger implication of divine care (which is expressed more fully in Matthew 6:24-28// Luke 12:24-28), is closer to the *ipssissima vox* of Jesus (Meier 1:174).

The Context of Persecution and Martyrdom

Those who were to suffer persecution and martyrdom were themselves insignificant in the political scheme of things. The death of Stephen (Acts 7:58) and the tribulations of Paul (2 Cor 11:23-27) are attested in the New Testament, but have no mention in Roman literature. The death of Jesus, himself, had only one brief notice in non-Christian Latin (Tacitus *Annals* 15.44). Thus the apparent insignificance of the birds was in effect symbolic of the apparent insignificance of those who would be persecuted and martyred.

To return to our question, was the context of persecution and martyrdom, one which was post-Easter only? Texts such as Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; Matt 16:21 in which the evangelists depict Jesus as predicting his sufferings and death, most probably owe their detail to hindsight after the Easter event (Kümmel 1974, 86-7; Hooker 1991, 204; Fitzmyer 1981-5, 1:777-9; Davies and Allison 1988-97, 2:659). However, John the Baptist, whose religious activities like those of Jesus attracted a large following, was executed during the lifetime of Jesus. According to Josephus (*Ant.* 18.5.2 §116-9), John the Baptist was put to death because of Herod's fear of an uprising due to John's popularity and the numbers of followers involved. While Josephus at times may be biased in his accounts, the fear of sedition seems a more likely reason for the death of John the Baptist than the colourful tradition of Salome's request (Matt 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29). Thus there is a precedent in Jesus' own lifetime of a religious leader being put to death. There was also a tradition of the prophets such as Isaiah (*Asc. Isa.* 5.1-2) and Zechariah (2 Chron 24:20-21; Luke 11:51) meeting a violent

death [8]. Therefore the possibility of a similar fate for Jesus may well have been recognised in his own lifetime, as the evangelists have indicated.

Although it has to be conceded that there is no record of John's disciples facing persecution, this may have been due to the dispersal of John's disciples after his death when some may have become followers of Jesus. Indeed, originally, Jesus may have been a disciple of John or at least closely connected with him (Sanders 1985, 91). Although there seems to have no actual persecution of the followers of Jesus during his lifetime, the possibility of such persecution if not martyrdom may well have been apparent, given the death of John the Baptist and the evident hostility on the part of the religious authorities to the teaching and praxis of Jesus (Matt 9:11; 12:14, 24; 15:12; Luke 5:21; 11:53; 15:1. Should the followers of Jesus meet the same fate (Luke 21:12), these followers would be seen as continuing in the tradition of those who faced martyrdom rather than become apostates (2 Macc 6:18-31; 4 Macc 8:1-17:1). Certainly there is a resonance of Wisdom 16:13-14 in the saying '...do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell' (Luke 12:4-5)'. (Parallels and differences between the Wisdom saying and the Lukan passion narrative are indicated by Beck [1981, 43-46]). If the likelihood of persecution for the followers was foreseen during the lifetime of Jesus, then it is possible that the context of martyrdom in the saying about the sparrows was not simply due to hindsight from the perspective of early persecution and martyrdom (Acts 6:8-7:60; 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 12:1-4).

Conclusion

When we reviewed the various interpretations of 'without your Father's will' (Matt 10:29b), we came to the conclusion that the deaths of the sparrows and martyrs are 'with God's knowledge and consent' rather than actually being willed by God. The point, which seems to be overlooked, is that there is no divine interference to prevent the deaths. However, neither sparrow nor martyr are 'forgotten by God' (Luke 12;6) since both are of value to God, if not to humanity. When comparing the two versions we found no theological implication in the different numbers of sparrows or in the prices at which they were sold.

We concluded that the tradition of violent deaths for the prophets and the death of John the Baptist indicated (during his lifetime), at least the possibility of a similar fate for Jesus. The possibility of persecution for his followers may also have been apparent given the evident hostility evinced towards the teaching of Jesus by the religious authorities plus the history of martyrdom rather than apostasy during the Maccabean wars. Thus although there seems to have been no actual persecution of the followers of Jesus during his lifetime, such a possibility may have been recognised.

Although there are more references overall to the natural world in Matthew than in Luke (Goulder 1974, 101) the Lukan version of the sparrows saying (12:6) like the Lukan version of the parable of the lost sheep (15:5) has a nuance of more concern for the creature mentioned. It is a nuance however and does not indicate any marked difference in attitude towards the creatures involved. As we have seen, the Lukan

version of the sparrows saying may well be nearer to the *ipssissima vox* of Jesus himself. There is an implicit distinction between cost and value in the passage. To people, the cost of the birds was a few coins: to God, the value of the birds was as part of creation. By pointing out that even the small birds sold for food mattered to God, Jesus is portrayed by the evangelists as emphasising how much God cared for the people who were facing persecution and even death. The nature of this *qal wahomer* argument meant that the sparrows themselves were of value. It is surely indicative of the way in which Jesus was perceived by his followers that such a saying was attributed to him. For the *a minori*, it would have been in keeping with the usual traditions attributed to Jesus, to speak of the poor and dispossessed. Instead, a few small dead birds evoked a poignant comment on providential care.

Endnotes: The Forgotten Sparrow

[1]One Greek writer who was meticulous in observing wild life was Alexander of Myndos, whose work survives only in fragments in Athenaeus (*Deipnosophistae*). Alexander distinguishes between the domestic (or house) sparrow and the wild (tree or Spanish sparrow) in *Athenaeus* 9.391F.

[2]The cognate languages are Accadian, Aramaic-Syriac and Arabic. Driver (1955a & b) wrote his articles on the birds of the Old Testament in conjunction with the ornithologist, David Lack.

[3]For a full list and discussion of classical allusions to στρουθίον see Steier (1929, 1627-1632).

[4]RSV translates 'or will you put *him* on leash for your maidens' (my italics) following the Hebrew which has the indirect object.

[5]In Proverbs 26:2 'Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying', RSV has correctly translated *ṣippôr* as the specific 'sparrow' and *dᵉrôr* as the specific 'swallow'. However, LXX has understood both terms generically and translated them as ὄρνεα and στρουθία respectively.

[6]An ὀβολός was one sixth part of a δραχμή and worth more than three halfpence (LSJ).

[7]White used the 1954 edition of Jeremias' *The Parables of Jesus* as the one available at the time. However, I have used the later 1972 edition.

[8]For a discussion of the identity of Zechariah see Lampe (1981, 127-8).

Excursus Three: Coinage

In New Testament times, coinage in Judaea and Galilee was a mixture of Roman and local currency[1]. The Roman golden aureus and silver denarius were obligatory legal tender throughout the Empire (Sutherland 1987, 31). The Herodians, on the other hand, were not allowed to mint silver or gold. Their bronze coins were of small value[2] and most, according to Jewish law (Exod. 20:4), bore no portrait on the obverse which had only the title or name plus a date, while the reverse of the coins figured objects such as ears of corn, date palms, cornucopiae or amphorae[3].

Roman currency from Augustus onwards had the following values:

1 aureus = 25 denarii

1 denarius = 16 asses

1 sestertius = 4 asses

1 dupondius = 2 asses

1 as = 4 quadrantes

The silver denarius was the standard Roman coin, indeed the coin used in *civil* tribute (Matt 22:19). Originally worth ten asses (assarii), it was revalued in 141 BCE at sixteen asses (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 33.45) and continued to dominate the coinage of the empire for another four hundred years. The *sacred* tribute was the half shekel (Exod 30:13,16) still being paid yearly by every adult male to the temple at Jerusalem (Madden 1903, 290). According to Josephus (*Ant.* 3.8.2 §194-5) the

Hebrew shekel was worth four Attic drachmas: the Attic drachma was, in turn, equal to the denarius (Madden 1903, 296). After the destruction of the Temple, Vespasian ordered the Jews to pay a tribute of two drachmas to the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus (Josephus *J.W.* 7.6.6 §218).

The assarion or as was introduced into the new Roman coinage in the third century BCE: the reckoning of Pliny (*Historia Naturalis* 33.45) gives a date of 268 BCE, but other evidence indicates a date of 212 BCE[4]. While the copper assarion was widespread throughout the empire, the coin in Luke 12:6 was probably the dupondius, the two assarion piece made of brass or oricalchum[5]: certainly, the Vulgate translates ἀσσάριον δύο as dupondius. The assarion was reckoned as worth a penny, while the quadrans was worth a farthing according to Plummer (1896, 320). However, any approximation of monetary value must always be considered in relation to the costs and wages of the times.

The Buying Power of the Coinage

In the Graeco-Roman world, one occupation for which there is information spanning several centuries is that of the Roman soldier. Out of his stipendium, the soldier had to pay for clothing, arms and tent, not to mention buying off the cruelty of the centurions (Tacitus *Annals* 1.17). From the third century BCE, the soldier's pay was 120 denarii per annum; at 10 assarii to the denarius, this was 1200 assarii per annum (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 33.45). Under Julius Caesar in 48/49 BCE, the soldier received 225 denarii per annum; at 16 assarii to the denarius this was 3600 assarii per annum. At the unrest of 14 CE, the soldier still receiving 225 denarii per annum,

wanted 360 denarii or a denarius per day (Tacitus *Annals* 1.17). However, the increase under Domitian 84/5 CE gave 300 denarii per annum (Suetonius *Domitian* 7.3): a rate which the soldier was still receiving in 200 CE. Finally, by the reign of Diocletian (300 CE) the rate of pay was 600 denarii per annum at a time when the daily manual wage was around 20 denarii (Burnett 1987, 119).

In the New Testament era, the denarius (sixteen assarii) was reckoned as a labourer's wage for a day (Matt 20:9-10, 13). Thus, of the assarion, Bock says: 'The most basic worker would earn this in roughly a half hour' (1994-6, 2:1137). The labourer, however, often also received food (*m. B. Meṣ.* 7:1): sometimes he was paid in kind (*m. B. Meṣ.* 9:12). During the first two centuries CE, Sperber (1965, 250-51) reckons that a loaf cost, on average, one twenty-fourth of a denarius. Of Mark 6:37, where the disciples say it would cost two hundred denarii to feed the five thousand, Jeremias (1969, 123) makes the point that the disciples were reckoning on a half day's ration of a twenty-fifth of a denarius. In *m. Pe'a* 8:7 the daily allowance to the itinerent poor was 'not less than one loaf worth a pondion from grain costing one sela for four seahs': in other words bread worth a twelfth of a denarius from grain which cost four denarii for thirteen litres[6]. Obviously, in times of famine, prices would increase, as happened during the reign of Claudius when a deal of wheat was sold for four drachmas (Josephus *Ant.* 3.15.3 §320): Jeremias (1969, 123) estimates that this was an increase of thirteen times the usual price. Oakman estimates that 1 denarius (16 assarii) would feed one person for roughly twelve days, and a family of two adults and four children for three days (1987, 36). At this rate of reckoning an assarion would feed one person for between one and two days. Although, the cost of

bread is given as an indication of prices, the ideal in the countryside, at least, was to be self-sufficient and a barter system operated. It was also considered unfortunate if people had to buy bread. In the Talmud, Rabbi Hanin says '...and have no assurance of your life. This is he who buys from the street vendor' (*p. Šeqal.* 8.1.51a).

Intervention in the Economy

At times there was direct imperial intervention in the economy; for example, Tiberius released 100 million sesterces to cope with the 'financial crisis' of 33 CE (Tacitus *Annals* 6.17). Because so many people had recently been convicted of infringing Julius Caesar's legislation on usury, by securing a major part of their capital on Italian estates, mortgaged land had to be sold and the coinage became locked up in the public aerarium or the imperial fiscus. This in turn caused a shortage of coinage, hence Tiberius' decision to release it through the bankers of the day. This would appear not to have had any ill effect on the economy.

Following the fire in Rome (Tacitus *Annals* 15. 38-45) Nero debased the silver and gold standard in 64 CE. The gold standard after the collapse of the republic had been reduced to forty aureii from a pound of gold (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 33.3). Under Augustus the standard was reduced to forty one aureii from a pound of gold: Tiberius, Gaius and Claudius reduced it still further to forty two aurii from a pound of gold. Nero's aureii were first struck at forty three aureii to the pound, then from 64 CE at forty five aureii to the pound. The silver standard followed a similar downward course from eighty-four denarii being struck from a pound of silver under Augustus, to ninety-six being struck from a pound under Nero after 64 CE.

Sutherland (1987, 96) rightly says: 'The reasons for weight reductions at any given time can only be a matter of speculation.' He goes on to suggest that the most likely reason for a gradual decrease (such as that from Augustus to the early years of Nero) was that former standard weights were destroyed and the new ones made were based on the least worn coins of the preceding period. However, what is more likely is that the reductions were a deliberate means of increasing revenue as surely there would have been standard weight measures kept at the mints.

Yet a third method of economic intervention was that of Diocletian, who sought to stabilise wages and prices by a maximum tariff. The *Edictum de Pretiis Rerum Venalium* of Diocletian which was passed in 301 CE, set a tariff of the highest prices at which commodities could be sold throughout the empire. Diocletian had set the tariff and also a table of maximum wages in an ill-fated attempt to combat inflation (Burnett 1987, 117). Howgego (1992, 30) suggests that a decline in the availability of the raw materials of gold and silver from mining and booty 'provides a context for the rapid debasement, the rarity of gold coinage, and the apparent monetary chaos of that century.' Although a shortage of bullion may have led to a scarcity in gold coinage, it did not necessarily lead to inflation. Staes (1899, 148) describes how two large engraved tablets containing fragments of this edict, set out in columnar form were found at Aegira in 1899. Item 37 on tablet A, column B sets the price of sparrows at 16 denarii for ten: this price was lower than that set for thrushes, beccaficoes or warblers, and starlings. (A copy of the Latin version can be found in *CIL* 3, 1926-1953). The devalued denarius in the edict was the new copper coin, not

the old silver one that had been equal to sixteen assarii in New Testament times. Thus three centuries later the sparrow was still regarded as a cheap form of food.

Endnotes: excursus three

[1]Roman bronze coinage was introduced by Agrippa 1 during his short reign (37-44 CE). Earlier, previous rulers continued to use the old Seleucid/Jewish system in which the smallest coin was a perutah (Jewish) or a dilepton (Seleucid), (see Maltiel-Garstenfeld, J. *New Catalogue of Ancient Jewish Coins.* Minerva: Tel Aviv 1987). In the lifetime of Jesus, the reference would have been to one of these Jewish bronze coins. However, as Luke and Matthew have spoken of Roman coinage (in this and other passages) I have included the excursus on Roman coinage to give some idea of the buying power of such coinage.

[2]For probable values of Jewish bronze coins see Schürer (1979, vol 2, 66). For a table of values of Jewish coins mentioned in Rabbinic literature see Schürer (64). However, care should be taken with regard to Schürer's equating of Roman and Jewish coin values: for example, he regards the zuz as being the equivalent of the denarius and the issar as the equivalent of the assarion, yet there are sixteen assarii to the denarius and twenty four issars to the zuz. Although, Dittenburger (1905, 108 n.14) shows that 'the imperial denarius might be exchanged for 17 or even 22 provincial copper asses', it is probably better to follow Hamel (1990, 33) and Sperber (1965, 251) and speak of fractions of a denarius.

[3]For descriptions and illustrations of Jewish coins issued during the lifetime of Jesus, see Hill (1914, 229-235, 248-256 and plates XXV and XXVIII). Abel (1952, 1:454) notes the 'dualité,' of Herod Agrippa (37-44 CE) whose coins issued at Jerusalem bore only the parasol and three ears of corn but those issued in the Hellenistic cities had the images of the reigning emperor. A full discussion of money in the New Testament can be found in Madden (1903, 289-304): see also Hamburger (1962, 3:426-35).

[4]For a discussion of the difficulties in exact dating of early Roman coinage see Burnett (1987, 10,11, 34) who, on new archaeological evidence, argues for a date of 212 BCE. Hill (1909, 28) is representative of the older numismatists who accepted Pliny's mid-third century dating (*Historia Naturalis*. 33.45). However, Hill (1909, 2,32,40) is aware that Pliny does not always interpret his sources correctly.

[5]For a description and illustration of the coinage of Tiberius minted at Rome and at eastern mints see Sutherland (1951, 206-7, plates VI-IX). For information on the mints of the Roman empire see Sutherland (1951, 185-198; and also 1987, 19-22, 32, 34).

[6]See Hamel (1990, 243-6) for discussion of weights and measures in general and (247-8) for information on measures relating to bread. See also Crawford (1970, 41) for a discussion of the comparable worth of the assarion in buying bread and wine in Italy during the first century CE.

9. The Withered Fig-tree.

Both accounts of Jesus' encounter with the fig-tree (Mark 11:13-14; 20-21; Matt 21:18-21) are set during Nisan, i.e. mid April, just before the Passover, and at Bethany near Jerusalem. After finding no fruit upon a fig-tree in leaf, Jesus addresses the tree whereupon, in Matthew 21:19, it withers immediately: in the Markan account, the cleansing of the Temple comes between the cursing (11:14) and the withering (11:20). In both accounts, the withering is a prelude to a lesson on faith and prayer. In this respect, the Matthean version seems relevant since Jesus relates his lesson to the fate of the tree (21:21), but here, by contrast, the Markan account seems disjointed, and the reference to forgiveness (11:25), sits uneasily with a cursing. How are we to understand this strange story? Why is Jesus portrayed as cursing a living tree for not having fruit when 'it was not the season for figs'? If we are to understand the story as symbolic, how is the symbolism of the withered tree to be interpreted? Does the tree stand for the Temple, for Jerusalem, for the Jewish people as a whole or is there another form of symbolism here? First, we will look at the fig-tree itself as a literal entity, where some of the facts about its cultivation may have a direct bearing on our understanding of not only the barrenness, but also the withering. Then we will look at the symbolism involved.

Cultivation of the Fig-tree

The fig-tree *(Ficus Carica)* was to be found throughout Judaea and Galilee. In the wild, it occurs as 'a low scrambling shrub, while in cultivation it is a small stiff tree, 2-5 m[etres] high...' (Polunin and Huxley 1972, 56). The fig was an important food

crop and was the most popular fruit eaten (either dried or pressed) on a regular basis (Safrai 1994, 136). There was, however, a fair amount of labour involved in harvesting the crop, since the fruits do not all ripen at the same time and the owner had to visit the tree every day (*t. Pe'a.* 1.7; *p. Ber.* 2.5.7c). There are two crops: the buds, which sprout in March-April as little, round, green knobs known as *paggîm* develop as the 'first-ripe' figs, *bikkûrîm*, which are ready for harvesting in May-June. The second crop, known as 'summer figs' *t^{e}'ēn*, is harvested from August to October. Not only do the fruits not ripen at the same time, but the fig has an unusual fertilisation called caprification involving a minute wasp (*Blastophaga psenes*), (Hepper 1992, 113).[1] Because of the amount of work involved in fertilising the trees (the male caprifigs had to be taken to the female trees) and also in harvesting the fruit, farmers tended not to have many fig-trees. The isolated tree in the story may have been a remnant of a neglected orchard or vineyard (Swete 1913, 253) or it may have been a wild fig. Even if it was a tree with branches overhanging a boundary wall into the roadway, it was permissible to gather the fruit from it (*m. Maʿas* 3.4).

The Lack of Fruit

In the context of the story, was there any possibility of some form of edible figs to be found?[2] The likelihood of neglected figs from the previous year's crop is ruled out by Lagrange: 'il est tout à fait sans exemple dans le pays que les figues demeurent sur les arbres pendent tout l'hiver' (1929, 293). Were the immature 'first' figs or *paggîm*, which did not mature and become *bikkûrîm* until May-June, edible in the early stages?. Chapman, suggesting that 'it was not the season for figs' is an insert, reiterated that it was put in by someone who did not know 'that Passover Pilgrims ate

figs near Bethphage', but he does not cite evidence for this (1993, 179, 181). However, the pilgrims may have eaten dried or pressed figs as, according to Polunin and Huxley, *'the half ripe fruit is considered to be poisonous'* (1972, 57). That the half ripe fruit is at least inedible is stated by Lagrange, who lived in Palestine for many years (1929, 293). Thus the possibilities of there being any winter figs still on the tree, and the eating of unripe summer figs seem to be eliminated.

The fact that there were leaves on the tree, would have suggested that at least there should have been the little green fruit buds, which normally appear before the leaves: but there was 'nothing but leaves' (Matt 21:19; Mark 11:13). This state of the fig-tree as having 'gone to leaf' has been described by Pliny (*Historia Naturalis* 17.42.253-54) and Theophrastus (*Historia Plantarum* 2.7.5). It may also have been the condition of the tree in Luke 13:7-9 (Cotter 1986, 65 n.14). The abnormally early foliage may have been due to unusually mild weather, and the absence of figs due to the tree's need of caprification (Goor and Nurock 1968, 46-69). Thus, there is a possible explanation for the tree's being in leaf but without fruit.

The Withering of the Tree

However, what about the withering? While exhaustive work has been carried out on the barrenness of the tree, no one seems to have established a possible botanical reason for the withering. One possibility is a bacterial disease caused by *Phytomonas fici* : 'This organism causes dark spots on the leaves, *sudden wilting and drying of the new growth in spring and summer* (italics mine) and longitudinal brown spots on the internodes of young branches' (Elliott 1951, 162). Bacterial infection may also cause

a tree to rot from the roots up (Billing 1987, 35; Bos 1983, 21, 23). Thus disease could have caused rapid, if not immediate, withering. That there was practical knowledge of fig-trees attributed to Jesus is evident from Matthew 24:32 where 'its branches become tender' probably refers to 'the milky latex present in the thick twigs in the spring' (Hepper 1992, 111).

'Rational' Explanations for the Incident

So far we have looked at the fig-tree as a literal entity. Perhaps now, we may look briefly at some of the 'rational' explanations of the incident[3]. One suggestion is that the action took place at the Feast of Tabernacles, in the autumn, when there would have been a chance of finding figs on the tree (Manson 1951, 279). However, this would not explain the Markan 'for it was not the season for figs' (11:13d). Cotter suggests that this is a Markan explanation to those unfamiliar with Jewish customs and 'the growing seasons in Palestine' and that Matthew removed the clause since his audience/readers would be aware of the time of Passover (1986, 66).

One of the earliest explanations from the historical school was that a withered tree outside Jerusalem had given rise to a tradition that it had been cursed by Jesus (Schwartz 1904, 83, so also Branscomb 1937, 201-2). This explanation is regarded as a possible genesis for the story by Taylor (1952, 459) and Nineham (1963, 299). However, as Davies and Allison (1988-97, 3:149) ask, would a withered tree have been 'sufficiently striking' to give rise to such an aetiological legend?

One other suggestion made was that there was a link with a parable (cf. Luke 13:6-9) and that a saying (or group of sayings) of Jesus was turned into a deed of Jesus (Nineham 1963, 299; Meier 1980, 237). That there is a link between the pericope (in both versions) and Luke 13:6-9 is possible, but the suggestion that the story in Mark is derived from Luke's parable does not answer the problem. Markan priority is normally accepted by scholarly consensus and 'It is something of an oddity then that the earliest gospel should present the later form of the fig-tree story, while the later gospel should present the earlier form of the pericope.' (Telford 1980, 236). However, it is quite possible that Luke preserved an older version and may even have preferred it (if those who maintain that much of Luke 9-18 contains older material are correct). We will be returning to the Lukan parable when we discuss the symbolic aspects of the story.

The other main area for looking for a rational explanation was the actual cursing. The action seems uncharacteristic of the usual portrayals of Jesus, whose miracles elsewhere have positive results and who was seen as refusing to turn stones into bread to satisfy his hunger (Matt 4:3-4). There have been suggestions that the words of Jesus were misunderstood by the disciples. Schwarz (1992, 36-37) suggests the Aramaic words of Jesus may have been: *lo' yêkôl bar nāšâ' minnîk pêrā' l^{e}'olam,* 'Never more will I eat fruit from you'[4]. He renders 'Son of man' as 'I' - which is possible given that Jesus often referred to himself indirectly as (the) Son of man (Mark 9:31; Luke 7:34 passim): however, the meaning 'anyone' would seem more likely in this context. Schwarz goes on to draw a parallel with the 'zweifachen Verzichterklärung' of the Passover meal and wine and posits the view that Jesus'

words to the fig tree constituted a similar renunciation of eating its future fruit 'so gegenüber dem Feigenbaum am Wege seinen schwurartigen Verzicht, von dessen - künftig zu erwartenden - Früchten zu essen' (1992, 37). The possibility of renunciation rather than prophecy in the words of Jesus at the Last Supper (Luke 22:15-18) has been recognised by others, notably Jeremias (1966, 209). However, Schwarz's parallel seems strained, as Jesus is not depicted as eating any fruit for the last time: moreover, he would have to have been in the habit of eating from the tree, which seems unlikely. As a putative retrotranslation the version of Violet (1923, 137-8) seems more probable (see note four below). However, retrotranslation is always a conjecture when the original is not known.

Nevertheless, there is an intriguing possibility of prophecy becoming imprecation in at least one of the accounts in the Greek. Let us look at both for comparison. In Mark 11:14 the Greek is μηκέτι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἐκ σοῦ μηδεὶς καρπὸν φάγοι 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again'. The use of the aorist optative φάγοι is generally accepted as indicating a curse since the optative expresses a wish (BDF 384). As we saw earlier, there are those who believe that there is a mistranslation from the Aramaic (Violet 1923, 137-38; Schwarz 1992, 36-37). However, in Mark, the Greek does indicate imprecation as is borne out by Peter's remark 'the tree which you cursed...' - κατηράσω (Mark 11:21). Yet, it may be argued that Peter is usually depicted as being quick of action, rather than of perception (Mark 9:5; Luke 12:41; Matt 14:29).

In Matthew 21:19 the Greek is μηκέτι ἐκ σοῦ καρπὸς γένηται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα 'May no fruit ever come from you again'. Here, the subjunctive aorist γένηται does not necessarily indicate a curse (BDF §365 [2]). A different reading preferred by Huck-Lietzmann, Tischendorf, Tasker, and Kilpatrick has οὐ μηκέτι which would then translate 'No fruit will ever come upon you again'[5]. Here, in Matthew 21:20, the disciples ask how the fig-tree withered at once. This might suggest that the disciples did not connect the withering with Jesus' words and there is no reference to a cursing in this verse, but the reply of Jesus seems to indicate that the withering was a result of his own action as portrayed in the story (Matt 21:21). Moreover, as Matthew is generally regarded as the later gospel, any change in wording from Mark could be due to redaction.

The Symbolism of the Fig-tree

So far we have surveyed some possible rational explanations for a literal understanding of the story. Perhaps, now it is time to look at the symbolic aspects. The idea of pure symbolism was put forward by Weiss, who claimed that Jesus meant a symbolic cursing of the tree, but God took it literally[6]. Wellhausen remarked ironically 'er (Weiss) hat Jesum verstanden und Gott hat ihn mißverstanden' (1909, 89). In order to understand the symbolism, we should look first at instances of a figurative use of the fig in Hebrew Scripture. The verse which has most bearing on the story is Jeremiah 8:13.

'When I would gather them, says the Lord,
there are no grapes on the vine,
nor figs on the fig tree;

even the leaves are withered,

and what I gave them has passed away from them.'

Here the context is of condemnation of the people (Jer 8:5) and a prophecy of coming disaster for the city and the land (Jer 8:14). Other uses of the fig-tree, or figs, to represent Israel are to be found in Hosea 9:10 and Micah 7:1. Thus, to the disciples and to other Jewish people, in the Matthean version of the fig-tree there was an evident symbolic link with the fig-tree in Hebrew Scripture. How would the story appear to the gentile readers/listeners of Mark? Telford has given a survey of trees and symbolism in the Graeco-Roman world (1991, 289-300). The most pertinent of the accounts he relates is that of the *ficus Ruminalis* which sheltered Romulus and Remus and which was taken to be a portent of disaster when it withered (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 15.20.77). Tacitus relates the account of one such withering (the tree was always replaced with another by the priests) in 58CE (*Annales* 13.58). Telford asks: 'The withering of a fig-tree at the Roman metropolis was seen as a portent of disaster for that city. Would the withering of a fig tree at the Jewish metropolis have been viewed any differently?' (1991, 300).

Before we answer Telford's question, we should perhaps consider some important differences between the two cultures. As we saw when discussing the wild animals in chapter one, there were similarities and differences between the two cultures in attitudes towards the natural world. The Jewish understanding of the natural world was that the land, the waters and all living things had been created by God (Genesis 1-3) and therefore belonged to God (Lev 25:23; Ps 50:10-11), but that the created was not in itself divine. The Graeco-Roman understanding of the natural world was

quite different. An entire species of animal would be held as sacred to a particular deity; for instance, the little owl (*Athene noctua*) was held to be sacred to Athene (Aristophanes *Aves* 516). Again, a particular herd or flock might be regarded as belonging to a deity; for example the Capitoline geese at Rome, which were held to be sacred to Juno (Livy 5.17.4). Part of the land itself, such as the temenos or precinct of a temple, was held as sacred. Moreover, every grove and stream had its own particular *genius loci*, while the earth itself was regarded as a goddess, Gaia. Plato, however, writing in fourth century Greece, did have a concept of creation (*Timaeus* 37D). Thus, in the Graeco-Roman view the natural world was permeated with the divine, whereas, to the Jewish understanding, the natural world was not in itself divine.

In the example of the fig-trees we may perceive such a difference. The Roman fig is a specific tree, which has been given a name and held in veneration while the priests tend it; moreover, the tree has been linked with the city of Rome since the founding of the latter. The Jewish fig-tree, on the other hand, is generic, not specific, and has symbolic links with the people, not the city. It is unlikely that Matthew's Jewish readers would connect the withered fig-tree with the tradition of the *ficus Ruminalis*, while not all of Mark's gentile readers would be acquainted with the tradition of the Roman tree. Moving along similar lines to Telford, Gemünden suggests that the fig-tree is an imperial symbol and the signal of a power change (1993a, 49). This idea is correctly dismissed by Luz, who argues that to the Jewish Christian readers of Matthew in Syria, and perhaps also to those of Mark in Rome, an acquaintance with

such traditions was a good deal less probable than an acquaintance with the prophetic traditions (1990-97, 3:202)[7].

Was the symbolism of the withered tree pointing to Jerusalem, to the Temple and the religious authorities, or to the people of Israel? In a suggestion, which encompasses all three possibilities, Nineham states that the significance of Mark's interpolating the cleansing of the temple between the cursing and withering of the tree, points to the fate of Jerusalem, the Jewish people and Judaism: the barrenness symbolised the lack of the fruit of righteousness (cf. Luke 13:6-9) and the withering the coming condemnation and destruction of Judaism (1963, 299). However, it was not Judaism that was to be destroyed, but much of Jerusalem and the Temple itself. While some have seen the withering as indicating the fate of Jerusalem and/or the Temple hierarchy (Davies and Allison 1988-97, 3:148) others have seen the destruction of the Temple cultus prefigured in the cursing in Mark (Telford 1980, 238; 1991, 303). Pesch states that Mark had knowledge of the destruction of the Temple, but whether he interpreted the cursing of the fig tree as a foreshadowing of this must remain open: 'Doch ob schon Markus die Verfluchung des Feigenbaumes auf die Zerstörung des Tempels deutete, muss offenbleiben' (1976-7, 2:201). We will look at the other possibilities before reaching a concluding answer to our question.

The other main contender for the symbolism of the tree is that it was intended to represent the people of Israel. As we saw earlier, the fig-tree was sometimes used as a symbol for the Jewish people and some commentators have seen this interpretation as a possibility (Hagner 1993-5, 2:605; Fenton 1963, 336; Hooker 1991, 267).

However, it is an interpretation that has rightly caused misgivings because of its potentially anti-Jewish nature (Bottrich 1997, 329; Luz 1990-7 3:200). Harrington argues that the condemnation was of Israel's religious leaders not of the people as a whole - indeed that Matthew realised the place of Israel in salvation history (1991, 298). Certainly, an interpretation of the tree as simply symbolising the Jewish people is unlikely from the Matthean perspective, particularly since Matthew is writing for a Jewish readership. We will look briefly at another possible interpretation of the symbolism of the fig-tree *per se*, before looking at the context in Matthew and in Mark and discussing how each evangelist saw the fig-tree in relation to the cleansing of the Temple.

One other possibility was that the tree, like the upright tree of Psalm 1:3, represented the individual person, while the lack of fruit represented the lack of response of some, not all, of the people to whom Jesus had preached. Luz correctly dismisses the idea that there should have been a messianic fruitfulness, since Jesus was not looking for a superabundance of fruit (1990-97, 3:202). Elsewhere, in Matthew (and Luke), fruit represents the person's actions while the tree represents the individual person: 'You will know them by their fruits... Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire (Matt 7:16-20; Luke 6:43-45). Gemünden argues that the fruit (not figs) in Mark 11:14 is to be understood as good deeds from people and such fruit will be demanded at any time regardless of season (1993b, 141). It is possible that the story of the cursing of the fig-tree developed out of a simple illustration of a barren tree representing the person who lacks righteousness.

The Tree and the Cleansing of the Temple

So far we have been looking at what the symbolism of the tree meant when taken by itself but, with the interpolation of the cleansing of the Temple in between the cursing and the withering of the tree, it is evident that Mark intended a connection to be made between the two (Telford 1980, 238). Hooker sees the cleansing of the Temple as a call to repentance by Jesus, which Mark has reinterpreted as a judgement because of the later destruction of the Temple and the city (1991, 266). However, in Mark, Jesus goes back to the Temple and is teaching there, when he is confronted by the religious leaders (Mark 11:27-8). This return would suggest that Mark did not see Jesus as being hostile to the Temple itself, but rather to aspects of the cultus and the religious leaders. The words uttered earlier by Jesus in the Temple, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations"? But you have made it a den of robbers' (Mark 11:17), would suggest that Mark is condemning aspects of the cultus and, possibly in particular, the sale of sacrificial animals and the exchange of money in the Court of the Gentiles which prevented the use of the Court for prayer by the gentiles (Hooker 1991, 267-68). Thus, Mark has used the barrenness of the fig-tree to symbolise the condemnation of the cultus and the religious authorities, and the withering to pronounce the eventual fate of the Temple. Moreover, it may be that the interval, between the cursing and the withering, symbolises the time between the cleansing of the Temple and its destruction. Yet, perhaps this is simply Markan style (cf. Mark 5:22-24, 25-34, 35-43). Here it is not worship at the Temple which is condemned, but some elements attached to the cultus (*pace* Hooker 1991, 264).

Matthew has placed the entire story of the fig-tree between the cleansing of the Temple (21:12-13) and the confrontation with the chief priests and elders (21:23-46). That Jesus, as he is depicted in Matthew, returns to the Temple and continues to teach and to heal after the cleansing indicates that Matthew does not perceive Jesus as condemning worship at the Temple, but rather that he condemned elements of the cultus and the insistence on the outward forms of observance (Matt 12:1-7; 15:1-9; 23:1-7). Elsewhere, Matthew draws a line between the Temple and the gifts made at it: 'Which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred?' (23:17). Thus Matthew has not used the fig-tree to represent either the Temple *per se* or the Jewish people. Instead, he has apparently used the episode of the fig-tree to illustrate a discourse on prayer, but at the same time he has used the withering of the tree as an indictment of the religious leaders who have been depicted elsewhere as concentrating on observance rather than righteousness (Matt 15:1-20). Telford sees Matthew as being uneasy with much of Mark's symbolism, which could lead to an interpretation of condemnation of the Jewish people as a whole, but he does not satisfactorily explain why Matthew kept the story at all, since Matthew could have chosen either to omit it, or to place it elsewhere, if he intended it simply as a lesson on prayer (1980, 82-84).

As we pointed out at the start of this chapter, the references to prayer and forgiveness seem strangely ill-matched to the story of the cursing in both Mark and Matthew. It is possible, as Hooker suggests, that these verses form an independent collection of sayings which were attached to the story of the fig-tree and the cleansing of the Temple (1991, 269). Although the verses are not strictly sequential,

it is also possible that there is a catchword link between the reference to the House of prayer (Mark 11:17; Matt 21:13) and the advice on prayer (Mark 11:24-5; Matt 21:22).

In the parable of Luke 13:8-9 the barren fig-tree receives a stay of execution, (cf Matt 7:19) and a period of grace is offered to the individual (Fitzmyer 1981-5, 2:1006). This seems more in keeping with the nature of Jesus as generally depicted (cf. Luke 6:27-31). This call to repentance and offer of grace is also found in Mark (1:15) and Matthew (4:17) and evinced in the association with sinners (Mark 2:16-17; Matt 9:10-13). However, the contrast between the condemnation of the tree in Mark and the period of grace offered to the tree in Luke, is such that Kinman argues Luke deliberately omitted the Markan story since it did not appear to offer hope to the Jewish people, some of whom had responded positively to Jesus (1994, 678).

We do not know the historical background of the story in Mark and Matthew. Yet, unless Mark invented the whole episode, there must have been some tradition or traditions referring to a fig-tree in his sources. One possible explanation of the strange story is suggested by Meier who, drawing upon form and source criticism, argues that the story of the fig-tree was created by a pre-Markan author 'to emphasize that the cleansing of the temple was not an act of reform and purification but rather a prophetic judgement on the temple' (1991-4, 2:894). In his argument, Meier points out that the challenge to Jesus by the religious authorities logically comes directly after the cleansing (cf. John 2:13-27), whereas in Mark, both the withering of the fig-tree and the discourse on prayer come between the cleansing and

the challenge. Thus there is a double intercalation: the discourse on prayer being Mark's intercalation to the pre- Markan 'wrapping' of the fig-tree round the cleansing, according to Meier (1991-4, 2:890-894). Moreover, the γάρ clause of 'for it was not the season for figs' (11:13d) is typically Markan (so also Cotter 1986, 63-4). Here, Meier argues that Mark has added it as one of the typical clauses that he inserts into traditional material which he has taken over, for example Mark 16:8 and 16:4.

However, there is one gap in Meier's argument namely the period at which the pre-Markan author composed the fig-tree story. If the story was composed to predict the doom of the Temple, then it is likely to have been composed at the earliest at some time during the First Jewish War, and at the latest only shortly before Mark wrote his Gospel. That such a late pre-Markan composition is possible, we have already seen in the chapter on the pericope of the Gerasene Demoniac. Meier's suggestion is certainly a possibility and it is also a probable explanation for the inclusion of the only punitive miracle in the Gospels.

Conclusion

When we looked at the fig-tree, we found that we could establish a rationale for the tree's being in leaf but without fruit. We could also establish a rationale for the sudden withering. When we looked at the 'cursing', we considered the possibility of mistranslation from Aramaic (but viewed this with extreme caution). However, when we compared the Greek versions of Jesus' words in Matthew and Mark we observed that in some textual variants in Matthew, it was possible to read Matthew as

prophecy not imprecation. Nevertheless, we decided that the story was intended to be understood symbolically

When we considered the symbolic aspects of the story, we looked to see what the story would convey to Mark's gentile readers/listeners and what it would convey to Matthew's Jewish audience/readers. We also considered the Roman fig tree (the *ficus Ruminalis*) for comparison. Then we looked at the question of whether the symbolism referred to the city, the Temple or the Jewish people. We decided that *originally* the symbolism of the doomed *barren* tree may have been a simple reference to the individual person who failed to respond to the call to righteousness, and, here, the lack of fruit represented the lack of good deeds. In Mark, the symbolism of the *barren* tree became an indictment of aspects of the Temple cultus (as was indicated by the cleansing of the Temple coming in between the cursing and the withering), rather than worship at the Temple itself. However, like the *withered* tree, the Temple itself was doomed. In Matthew, the pronouncement on the tree is linked more closely with the lesson on prayer and is not so obviously linked to the cleansing of the Temple, where Jesus carries out healings after the cleansing. Here in Matthew, the symbolism of the withered tree is also likely to pertain to the Temple cultus and the religious leaders, and not to the Jewish people.

In both versions Jesus is depicted as accepting that the fig-tree withered as a result of his words (whether they be taken as prediction or as imprecation). Both Mark and Matthew, therefore have depicted Jesus as showing power over a natural tree in a negative way. This is the only negative miracle in the Gospels and is so strange that

we have to wonder why it was shown in this way. Perhaps Jesus did prophesy the doom of a diseased tree and compare it to those who failed to show righteousness, and in transmission prophecy became imprecation, possibly at a pre-Markan stage. Alternatively, the entire story may be a (pre-) Markan composition to portray the cleansing as a prophecy of doom rather than as a call to reform. We simply do not know. What is certain is that we are meant to understand the story as symbolic. Against the background of the destruction of a city and many of its inhabitants, along with the Temple which had symbolized much of what the Jewish people had held dear, the fate of one tree must have seemed of little consequence.

Finally, we have argued that it is right to draw positive implications for the attitude of Jesus and his followers to the natural world from positive symbolism used by the Synoptic writers. Such symbolism includes that of the sheep (Luke 15:4-7; Matt 18:10-14) and the ass (Matt 21:2-7; Luke 19:29-35; Mark 11:2-7). On the face of it, the story of the cursing of the fig-tree would appear to have negative implications toward the natural world, yet most of the symbolism used in the Gospels in reference to the natural world is of a positive character. As we will see in our final chapter, the references to providential care of both animal and plant (Matt 6:26-28; Luke 12:24-28) are of positive affirmation of the natural world and are consistent with the more familiar portrayal of Jesus as compassionate.

Endnotes: The Withered Fig-tree

[1]The female of the minute wasp *Blastophaga psenes* hatches out in the male caprifig: there, the female wasp is fertilised by the male. Next she goes to the female figs where she deposits the pollen brought from the anthers of the caprifigs on to the florets of the female figs. Thus, fertilisation of the fig tree takes place. From ancient times farmers have ensured this happens by taking caprifigs to the female figs (Hepper 1992, 113). Theophrastus describes caprification and appreciates the involvement of the gall-wasp (*Historia Plantarum* 2.8.1-4).

[2]Taylor states: 'This possibility is shown by an original photograph of a fig tree [*sic*] with fruit sent to me by the Rev. Eric F.F. Bishop, M.A., Newman School of Missions, Thabor, Jerusalem and dated "Good Friday, 1936"' (1952, 460 n. 1).. The figs in the photograph may have been immature figs.

[3]The most extensive work on the episode of the fig-tree can be found in Telford (1980).

[4]Although Schwarz does not acknowledge it, and presumably came to his conclusion independently, Violet posited a similar retrotranslation into Aramaic: *mkyl wl'lm 'nš mnnky p'r' l' n'kwl* 'no one will ever eat fruit from you again' i.e. a future tense of prediction (1923, 137-8).

[5]The witnesses are B L O.

[6]This was B.Weiss's suggestion in his editorial comment on Meyer's trügerische Blättersmucke theory (Meyer 1892, 195).

[7]We do not know for certain where the Gospels were written, only that Mark was writing for a gentile readership, and Matthew for a Jewish one.

10.The Birds of the Air and the Lilies of the Field

Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them (Matt 6:26).

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these (Matt 6:28-9).

These two memorable passages and the Lukan parallels (12:24, 27) raise several questions. What was the overall purpose of the illustrations and the admonition 'do not be anxious' (Matt 6:25; Luke 12:22)? Is it a warning against anxiety, against being a 'prisoner of worry' (Luz 1989, 1:403), or against greed and a preoccupation with the material? Is it in fact more than an admonition concerning attitude, but an implied command to renounce possessions or even to forgo work? One way of finding an answer to these questions is perhaps to ask another question: to whom were the admonitions addressed? Was it to the Twelve? Was it to a slightly wider group of followers or to the community at large? What is meant by 'the birds of the air' or ravens? What is meant by 'lilies'? We will be looking at the context of the sayings later to seek answers, but first we will look at what was intended by 'birds'/'ravens' and also by 'lilies'.

'The Birds of the Air' and the Ravens

One question not asked by the commentators about this passage is: 'What were the likely birds of the air?' In speaking of 'the birds of the air have nests...' (Matt 8:20),

Derrett maintains that 'the "birds of the air", a biblical cliche, are vultures' (1985, 223). This is true in some instances (for example 2 Sam 21:10) but not in other uses of *'ôph* (or πετεινὰ in the LXX), where the word simply means 'bird' (Eccl 10:20). Moreover, vultures do not compete for food in stealing seed as Derrett appears to suggest (1987, 185, 191 n.24). We will return to a discussion of the 'birds' later. If we assume for the moment that the expression 'birds of the air' refers to birds in general, then there are plenty of species to consider. In Israel there are about four hundred and seventy listed species of which ninety one are resident, seventy two are summer breeders and ninety four are common winter visitors, the others are passage migrants (one hundred and twenty one species) and accidentals (Paz 1987, 1-2). Among those seen in the area of Lake Galilee are: quail (*Coturnix coturnix*), rock partridge (*Alectoris graeca*), fish owl (*Ketupa ceylonsis Semonovi*), collared dove (*Streptopelia decaocia*), turtle dove (*Streptopelia turtur*), blackbird (*Turdus merula*), white wagtail (*Motacilla alba*), white stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) and Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*). This is merely a representative selection of the many species which can be seen in the area (Lulav 1978, 439-442).

The parallel passage in Luke 12:24 is 'Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them'

The word κόραξ (a hapax legomenon in the New Testament) is usually translated 'raven' but may also mean crow. In discussing *'ôrēb*, the Hebrew equivalent, Driver (1955a, 12) argues that 'and after his kind' (Lev 11:15; Deut 14:14) suggests that *'ôrēb* may be a generic name (i.e. that it includes all members of the corvidae).

However, as the crow of Israel is the hooded crow (*Corvus cornix*) which is mainly grey, and as the root of *'ôrēb* is 'to become black', Driver thinks it would pertain to ravens (*C. corax*) and rooks (*C. frugilegus*). The raven was considered unclean because it is a carrion eater, but it fills a necessary ecological niche. The birds pair for life and care for their young even after they have left the nest (Parmelee 1959, 225-6). Though it is primarily a bird of cliffs and mountains, the raven frequents Jerusalem in winter along with other members of the corvidae (Bodenheimer 1935, 155). The first mention of the raven in Genesis 8:7 may well have a basis in the sailors' habit of taking the birds with them on board ship in order to 'smell' out land (Bodenheimer 1960, 57): certainly, this usage is depicted in Pliny (*Historia Naturalis* 6:83). Driver suggests that the story of Elijah's being fed by ravens (1 Kings 17:4-6) may have its basis in the birds' habit of secreting food in rock fissures (1955a, 12). The passage in Luke 12:24 recalls the providential care of the raven in Job 38:41 'Who provides for the raven its prey...?'

'Ravens' is probably the original version in that the generic 'birds of the air' τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (which occurs thirty four times in the LXX) is due to Matthean redaction (Luz 1989, 1:401). Marshall (1978, 527) suggests that τὰ πετεινὰ was substituted because the raven was one of the unclean birds (Lev 11:15; Deut 14:14): Luz disagrees (1989, 1:405 n.38). Although he acknowledges the possibility of Matthean revision because of the raven's uncleanness, Gundry (probably correctly) posits 'parallelism and conformity to the OT' as reasons for the change (the parallel being 'birds of the air' with 'lilies of the field'), (1982, 116). It is also possible that Marshall is correct in thinking it likely that there were two variant

forms of the tradition (1978, 525). However, against Powell (1982, 490 n.1) it seems unlikely that 'ravens' would be substituted for 'birds of the air'. Moreover, Black has shown the paronomasia of the likely original Aramaic: 'Consider the ravens (or^{e}bhin)...and God feedeth them (m^{e}rabbe) them' (1967, 179). However, while it may be useful to look at the possible Aramaic, it must be remembered that it is conjectural[1].

The Activities *not* undertaken by the Birds

In Matthew the birds 'neither sow nor reap, nor gather into barns' (6:26): in Luke the ravens 'neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn' (12:24). Davies and Allison (1988-97, 1:650) state that Luke is original while Marshall advocates the two variant forms of the tradition once more (1978, 527): Catchpole, by contrast, says that Matthew is original (1993, 38). Certainly the Lukan double negative οὐ... οὐδὲ, οὐκ...οὐδὲ is more finely balanced than the Matthean οὐ ...οὐδὲ ...οὐδὲ, though both are standard constructions (BDF §445).

Work: Day to Day Necessity or Preparation for the Future?

The idea of animals working is found in the rabbinic literature, although in a different context. According to the Mishnah, R. Simeon b. Eleazar says: 'Hast thou ever seen a wild animal or a bird practising a craft? Yet they have their sustenance without care.... But I was created to serve my Maker. How much more then ought I to have my sustenance without care? But I have wrought evil and forfeited my right to sustenance without care.' (*m. Qidd.* 4:14). The style of argument *a minori* is the same though the perspective is quite different. Another rabbinic story, this time

attributed to the second century R. Meir,: 'In this life have you seen a lion as a porter, a deer as a drier of figs, a fox as a shopkeeper, a wolf as a dealer in pots? And yet they feed themselves without trouble' (*p. Qidd.* 4:66b)'. The underlying implication here is that God provides the food for the creatures (Ps 104:27-28; Ps Sol 5:9) while fallen man has to work for sustenance (Ps 104:23; Job 7:1-2). Fallen man's having to work for sustenance is a harking back to Genesis 3:19 where Adam is told he will have to work by the sweat of his face to eat his bread. Here, Dillon (1991, 614) contends that 'it might be legitimate to hear in Jesus' "do not be anxious" a release from the anxious "toil" laid upon both protoparents by their Creator's sentence (Gen 3:16,17)'. However, in Genesis 2:15 *before* the fall, God ' took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden *to till it and keep it* '. As Wenham (1987, 1:67) says 'paradise was not a life of leisured unemployment.' This topic will be discussed more fully later.

Montefiore argues that (a) birds do labour for their sustenance and their nests (b) and many of them are often not provided for and die of want and hunger (1927, 2:111). What is to be understood by labour? The Synoptic Jesus did not mean that God put the food into the birds' mouths, but instead provided food for them to find. The saying related to the birds was 'they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly father feeds them'. Here the emphasis is surely on taking thought for the future: by sowing, the farmer looks toward the harvest; by reaping and gathering into barns, he looks to provision for times to come. The point of the saying attributed to Jesus was that the birds were concerned with the day's needs only. Certainly, there are one or two species such as the jay (*Garrulus glandarius*) which

pluck acorns in autumn and bury them to eat later in hard weather, a trait observed by Aristotle (*Historia Animalium* 9.616 a 3). However, this is unusual behaviour for birds, which in winter have to eat up to a third of their body weight merely to stay alive. (The smaller the bird, the higher is the proportion of heat loss). Montefiore has introduced an extraneous element when he speaks of nest building: here the birds are working to the future, the next generation. In the analogy attributed to Jesus there is no mention of future generations. Montefiore's next point is of the birds dying of want and hunger. In harsh winters certain species in Europe such as wrens (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) and kingfishers (*Alcedo atthis*) may be decimated. However, in the complex 'web of creation' the deaths of the small birds may mean life for the larger carrion eaters such as the raven.

Derrett (1987, 185) takes a somewhat polemical view of the birds 'these birds make no effort to accumulate merit, ... which men properly advised must take opportunity to do. Birds compete for food ... but instead of sowing they steal farmers' seeds, and they bring no harvest into barns.' However, the point of the birds' not sowing, reaping and gathering into barns was that they were not planning for the future, but living day by day as the listeners were being advised to do, in an echo of Exodus 16:16-21. Certainly, elsewhere, the birds are shown as carrying off the seed which has fallen on the path (Mark 4:4). While Derrett (1987, 185) and Fitzmyer (1981-5, 2:960 n.6) speak disparagingly of the birds, they fail to see the beneficial aspects to people of the insect eating species which prevent some of the damage done to crops by caterpillars and adult insects. A classic example of this is the locust bird, or rose-coloured starling (*Pastor roseus*): flocks of these wreak havoc on locusts as observed

by Tristram (1884, 73). Moreover, even the seed-eating species feed their young with caterpillars and insects. However, '...because the birds do not have to labour to process their food from nature, their dependence on the Creator's provision is the more immediate and obvious' (Bauckham 1998a, 41).

The Lilies of the Field

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these (Matt 6:28-29).

Black again demonstrates the assonance and alliteration of the possible original Aramaic of Matthew 6:28-9: Consider the lilies (shushanin) of the field, how they grow (shabh^{e}hin)...even Solomon (Sh^{e}lomoh) in all his glory (teshbohteh) was not arrayed like one of these (1967, 178-9).

One of the most evocative and memorable passages in the bible, this text has had its share of varying interpretations. One question which the commentators do ask is 'what flower is meant by 'lilies'? The word, κρίνον, which is normally used to translate the Hebrew *šûšan* (or *šôšanā*)[2] in the LXX is traditionally considered to be the white lily (*Lilium candidum*) according to M. Zohary (1982, 176) and Fonck (1900, 73). It is mentioned as κρίνον in Theophrastus (*Historia Plantarum*. 6.6.8.). Although M. and Mme. Ha-Reubeni (1947, 362) state that *Lilium candidum* is the λείριον, in Theophrastus (*Historia Plantarum* 6.6.9), λείριον is also a synonym for νάρκισσος . The flower of the *Lilium candidum* with its six graceful recurving petals was a symbol of beauty and, in the Christian era, of spiritual purity also as

typified by the paintings of the Annunciation by Titian, Botticelli and Rossetti among others[3]. It now grows only in Galilee and on Mt Carmel in the Mediterranean type of vegetation (Hepper 1992, 46). It is possible, however, that it once had a wider range (Moldenke 1986, 115; Fonck 1900, 71-3). However, since the white lily is a shade-loving, woodland plant, it is unlikely to be the lily of the field (Löw 1924-34, 2:170, Trever 1962, 3:133).

There have been many other opinions as to what the 'lily' might be. The most well-known suggestion is probably that of Tristram, who suggested the red form of the flower 'the *Anemone coronaria* ... most generally a brilliant scarlet, is the flower which as the most gorgeously painted, the most conspicuous in spring and the most universally spread of all the floral treasures ... I should feel inclined to fix on as the lily of the field.' (1880, 464). Other reasons given by Tristram for his choice are: firstly that the anemone meets the requirements of the allusions to *šôšanā* in Song of Songs 2:1,2; and secondly that the Arabs refer to it (among other brightly coloured flowers) as *susan*. Others had put forward suggestions before Tristram, however. Souciet (1715, 158-9) opted for the fritillary (*Fritillaria imperialis*)[4]. Later, J.F.Royle argued that it was the scarlet martagon lily (*Lilium chalcedonicum* or *L. martagon*) which 'as it is in flower at the season of the year when the Sermon on the Mount is supposed to have been spoken, and is indigenous in the very locality and is conspicuous... for its remarkable showy flowers, there can be little doubt that it is the plant alluded to...' (1845, 2:251).

Dalman suggested that if 'field' meant cornfield, the 'lily' might be the gladioli (*Gladiolus segetum* and *atroviolaceus*) because of the colour of the petals resembling the purple robes of Solomon, whose wealth was legendary (2 Chron 9). If however, 'field' meant a desert place then it was more likely that Jesus was referring to the succession of red flowers, the anemone (*Anemone coronaria*) blooming in February to March, followed by the red ranunculus (*Ranunculus asiaticus*) in April and succeeded by the red poppy (*Papaver rhaeas*)in May (1925, 98; 1935, 158). The gladiolus (*Gladiolus spp.* x 5) was also the suggestion of Post (1932, 2:773), while the asphodel (*Asphodelus microcarpus*) was mooted by Lundgren (1917, 829). Other suggestions have included *Colchicum spp.*, *Tulipa praecox*, *Iris spp.*, *Lilium cephalodonium* [5].

Yet another candidate for the 'lily' was the chamomile or Easter daisy (*Anthemis spp.*) proposed by M. and Mme Ha-Reubeni (1947, 363). They suggest that because its beauty was not evident at first glance, 'Jésus y attirait l'attention comme ferait un poète dévoilant une beauté, inattendue'. They also argue that unlike the other plants listed (1947, 362) the chamomile is thrown on the fire. However, it is the *grass* which is thrown on the fire - and by implication any flowers which have dried with the grass - (Matt 6:30; Luke 12:28). In defence of their suggestion, as the raven rather than the dove is chosen to represent the birds, so also some completely unexpected flower could have been chosen to represent the plants. The Ha-Reubenis also mention the possibility that 'the lilies' refer to wild flowers in general (1947, 362): a thought expressed earlier by Tristram, and recently by Moldenke (1986, 44) and Hepper (1992, 46). However, had the reference been to flowers in general, we

would have expected that ἄνθη corresponding to *ṣîṣ* would have been used, (c.f. ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου Isa 40:6 LXX and 1 Pet 1:24). There is of course the possibility that in Luke 'lilies' refers to one specific flower as a parallel to the raven, whereas Matthew has envisaged flowers in general 'the lilies of the field' as a parallel to 'the birds of the air' (cf. Powell 1982, 490 n.1). Finally, 'Even if the flower cannot be specifically identified, the import of Jesus' words is clear: The "lilies" do nothing to achieve their own beauty' (Fitzmyer 1981-5, 2:979).

The Activities *not* undertaken by the Lilies

The Greek of Matthew 6:28 offers some interesting variants:

Τὰ κρίνα τοῦ ἀγροῦ - 'the lilies of the field'.

The commentators are agreed that τοῦ ἀγροῦ is Matthean redaction, and that here the Lukan version is original: Luz (1989, 1:401); Davies and Allison (1988-97, 1:654); Fitzmyer (1981-5, 2:979); Marshall 1978, 528).

πῶς αὐξάνουσιν οὐ κοπιῶσιν οὐδὲ νήθουσιν - 'how they grow; they neither toil nor spin'.

In his deciphering of the original reading of Sinaiticus*, Skeat (1938, 211) was helped by looking at a fragment of an uncanonical Gospel from Oxyrhyncus (P. Oxy. iv.655). In the latter, Skeat perceived that the translation by Grenfell and Hunt (1904, 24-5) 'which grow but spin not' was based on a reading of ἄτινα αὐξάνει οὐδέ νήθει : Skeat realised that it should be ἄτινα οὐ ξαίνει οὐδὲ νήθει 'which neither card nor spin' as (a) the second α of αὐξάνει is only a speck on the manuscript and 'might well be followed by any letter', and (b) syntactically, it makes better Greek.

Later, under the light of an ultra-violet lamp Skeat was able to determine that in Sinaiticus* Matthew 6:28 was πῶς οὐ ξένουσιν οὐδὲ νήθουσιν οὐδὲ κοπιῶσιν - lit. 'how they do not card, nor spin, nor toil': instead of πῶς αὐξάνουσιν ... 'how they grow...'. (N.B. ξενω = ξαινω BAGD p.547) Aware that every other witness in Matthew was against the reading of Sinaiticus*, Skeat looked at Luke 12:27 : here there were two major readings:

πῶς αὐξάνει οὐ κοπιᾷ οὐδὲ νήθει -'how they grow, they neither toil nor spin'.

πῶς οὔτε νήθει οὔτε ὑφαίνει - 'how they neither spin nor weave'.

Skeat argued that the first of these was an assimilation to Matthew and that πῶς οὔτε νήθει οὔτε ὑφαίνει is the original in Luke: this is certainly a possibility (Davies and Allison 1988-97, 1:654 n.22). Skeat then posited the theory that in Matthew the original was πῶς οὐ ξαίνει οὐδὲ νήθει and that after the corruption to αὐξάνει , the negative οὐδὲ νήθει was left without a counterpart (cf P. Oxy.iv.655). This is when οὐ κοπιᾷ was inserted. Skeat argues that this in fact goes back to Q.

In his critique of Skeat's hypothesis, Katz (1954, 209) argues that οὐδὲ κοπιῶσιν in Matthew 6:28 was in the text *before* the corruption to αὐξάνει, and was introduced to parallel the three verbs of verse 26. While Skeat suggested that the original reading of Sinaiticus* was a 'brilliant scribal conjecture', Katz thinks that it was more likely the correct reading which had survived only here. He thinks the two verbs 'card and spin' in Matthew and 'spin and weave' in Luke are two variants in the

oral stage of transmission. He may well be correct, although Luz (1989, 1:400) does not accept that the reading of Sinaiticus* was anything more than a scribal error, and Manson (1947, 112) suggests that toil and spin may be a word play in Aramaic (*amal* and *azal* respectively). While it is worthwhile to look at the possible Aramaic underlying the written texts, it must always be regarded as possible, not actual.

Luz's dismissal of this reading in Sinaiticus* as an error may be correct, but no commentator, no matter how excellent, has a monopoly of truth and insight. Therefore, Katz is probably correct in maintaining that οὐ ξαίνουσιν in Matthew 6:28 is an instance where the correct reading has survived in a single manuscript. (Although the fourth century majuscule is later than some of the earlier witnesses which read αὐξάνουσιν , Sinaiticus may be the sole surviving instance of a line of transmission of what was originally the correct reading.) Moreover, Katz is probably also correct in maintaining that κοπιῶσιν was introduced to provide a parallel of three verbs to the three in Matthew 6:26. If κοπιῶσιν was introduced to provide a second negative to follow οὐδὲ and so constitute better Greek syntax, then why did the scribe not change the verbs to the singular after the neuter plural of κρίνα? This point is lost in Skeat's discussion as he speaks of this particular transmission in the Lukan text that does use singular verbs after κρίνα.

Another Variant

Powell (1982, 490) added a new twist to the discussion on lilies with his suggestion that the original was not 'lilies of the field' but 'beasts of the field' *(ḥayyat haśādeh*). As he points out, there is no similarity between *ḥayyat* 'beasts' and *šôsannîm* (sic)

'lilies' in Hebrew, but in Greek θηρία 'beasts' could be altered to λείρια 'lilies' which became the synonym κρίνα. He reiterates with the suggestion that the reference to 'Solomon in all his glory was not clad like one of these' should be that 'Solomon in all his glory was not clad as one of you (will be)'. He then continues 'For the whole passage was, and is, eschatological. In the Kingdom the elect will be supernaturally fed and clothed without human labour, as the birds and beasts are naturally fed and clothed'. He argues that unless the corruption of beasts into lilies was not a Greek corruption, then 'the text had already been glossed, annotated and corrupted in Greek before the substantial expansion and editing to which "Solomon in all his glory" and "the grass of the field" bear witness' (1982, 492).

Certainly the 'beasts of the field' is a Hebraic parallel to the 'birds of heaven' and his argument about clothing may reasonably appear to belong to animals being 'clad' in skin or fur (without recourse to carding and spinning) rather than the 'flowers' being clad. It is also a reasonable inference that θηρία could become λείρια (presumably by itacism). However, there are no witnesses that support this inference - unlike the case of 'card' discovered by Skeat (q.v.) that Powell claims is a close parallel. His statement that the passage is eschatological may be true in part, but 'let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day' suggests an attitude to each day of the present rather than a promise for the future. Furthermore, (according to both Matthew and Luke) Jesus says that 'the kingdom of God has come upon you' or 'is in the midst of you' (Matt 12:28; Luke 17:21)? In conclusion the conjecture which started from one or two reasonable premises becomes too involved, and destroys the compound

parallelism of the two illustrations of birds and flowers as shown by Manson (1949, 112).

Solomon on Wealth

Arguing that Solomon is typified as an anxious and oppressive acquirer of wealth, in contrast to the inactive flowers, Carter states that Solomon's actions are representative of the kind of activity which God does not want (1997, 18-9, 25). Carter's method is one of intertextuality: for example, he cites the negative actions of the kings listed in the genealogy of Matthew 1 (1997, 11) which he links with the text on cares. Although Carter is right to argue that Solomon is not portrayed in a positive light, his argument is based on the wrong premise. Had the point been that Solomon was an anxious striver after wealth, then his name was more likely to have been linked with the text on wealth 'you cannot serve God and Mammon' (Matt 6:24). Moreover, Carter's argument is one of antithesis: the flowers do not spin or toil, but Solomon does act oppressively in gaining wealth. However, the text does not say this, the text says 'even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these'; it is comparison not antithesis. The allusion may be ironical: Solomon, in spite of all his splendour, was not attired like the flowers in their God given beauty. However, the implication is not so polemical as Carter argues. The use of intertextuality as a means of interpretation may lead to eisegesis rather than exegesis.

The Underlying Attitude to the Birds/Ravens and the Lilies

Before looking at the context proper with the implications for those addressed, there is one last observation to be made concerning the birds (ravens) and lilies as to how

they were regarded. The second illustration, that of the flowers, is in two parts: (a) the lilies which do not work but surpass Solomon in splendour, (b) the grass which is clothed today and thrown on the fire tomorrow. If we take the main part of the second illustration as being the ephemerality of the grass (even the grass is clothed), then the reference to the birds/ ravens may be understood as 'even the seed-eaters or scavengers are fed by God': this is certainly a possible interpretation. However, it is not the ephemeral grass that 'we' are being asked to consider, it is the *beauty* of the lilies. Therefore, it seems more likely that the reference to the birds/ ravens *per se* does not have pejorative undertones but is simply a continuation of the Wisdom tradition (Ps 104:10-13; Job 38:41). That the reference to those addressed being dependent upon providential care is against sapiential tradition will be discussed more fully later.

Work and Wealth

Having looked at the passages with reference to the birds and flowers involved, it is time to try to find an answer to the question: 'what was the overall purpose of the illustrations combined with the admonition "do not be anxious"?' Fitzmyer sees the passage as putting concern about material possessions into perspective, that life is more than the needs of material existence and that preoccupation with earthly concerns 'may prove to be only an obstacle to the single-minded pursuit of and service to the kingdom' (1981-5, 2:977). Certainly precedence is given to the kingdom, as is evident in the Lord's prayer where 'thy kingdom come' precedes 'give us this day our daily bread' Matt 6:11). Although ἐπιούσιον (normally translated as daily) may well be ἐπι οὐσιον 'necessary for existence', the implication is of

sufficiency not surplus (cf. Exod 16:15-18 where each person had enough, no more and no less). Interpretations of the passage as an admonition against striving for wealth, may well have been appropriate to the more affluent of the listeners in the *wider* audience (cf. Matthew 6:24 'you cannot serve God and mammon'). Marshall (1978, 525-26) states that the passage (Luke 12:22-34) 'In its warnings against striving for wealth it goes beyond Pharisaic Judaism and stands nearer to Qumran'.

Causes of Poverty

Many of those in the crowds who listened to Jesus, however, were struggling for subsistence in a land where they had to contend with several potential causes of famine and of poverty. The climate was uncertain (1 Kings 17:1-7; Jer 14:1-6) and in the Jerusalem area, for example, precipitation ranged from 799mm (1890-4) to only 400mm (1925-8) with fluctuating amounts in between (Bodenheimer 1935, 46). Temperature fluctuations and the differences in this respect between areas are small in comparison with those of precipitation (Bodenheimer 1935, 48).

Plagues of locusts (Joel 1-2; 2 Chron 6:28) and blight and mildew (Amos 4:9) were not infrequent. 'Hunger and poverty have followed in the wake of the desert locust (*Schistocera gregaria*) in Palestine from Biblical times up to our own day' (Bodenheimer 1935, 349). The book of Joel gives a graphic and chilling account of an invasion of locusts: although the imagery is apocalyptic (it depicts the locusts as an invading army on the 'day of the Lord'), it does not exaggerate the devastation. Driver (1956, 31) cites a report of one swarm covering 2,000 square miles and comprising 24,420 billion insects. There are other insects beside locusts that cause

damage to crops. The caterpillars of the *Noctuidae*, can attack and destroy whole fields of corn within a few days (Bodenheimer 1935, 219). The blight of Amos 4:9, is *šiddāpôn* dessication owing to drought and wind, the east wind in particular: 'scorched by the east wind' (Gen 41:6). Dalman (1928-42, 2, 334) describes the appearance of the scorching as 'Braun-rost' (rust brown). The mildew of Amos 4:9, *yērāqôn* is caused by *Puccinia graminis Persoon* a microfungus which grows in excessive humidity (Soggin 1987, 74). Here, Dalman describes the tips of the green grain turning pale due to "Würmerbildung" (1928-42, 1.2: 326). Thus extremes of drought or humidity caused disaster.

Others causes of poverty among the people were taxes (1 Macc 10:29) and tithes (Num 18:26). The Romans levied a poll tax, the *tributum capitis*, on every member of the population. They also exacted *portoria* on goods in transit, while the *centesima rerum venalium* were levied on the sale of goods brought to town or city markets. The land tax *tributum soli* was exacted from the landowners, 'but it first affected those who worked on the land, since any removal of produce affected their well-being, only less so in years of abundance' (Hamel 1989, 145). The Jewish system of tithing affected everything that was cultivated. In practice at least since before the first Jewish War, the tithe was directly taken by the priests themselves (Hamel 1989, 148). Both sides, Jewish and Roman, had to take each other into account, as the Romans required the assistance of the local hierarchy in keeping order and facilitating the collection of taxes (Hamel 1989, 149). This view, as Oakman points out, differs from the traditional image of the combination of Roman and Jewish taxes placing an intolerable burden on the Jewish people. It is a view which Oakman

regards as being only partly correct, since: 'In addition to the needs of the state and the old aristocracy (the priests), the needs of the new aristocracy (Herodians) and prebends for the Roman officals (procurators) must be kept in mind.... Yet one suspects that for the most part the old and new aristocracies competed for the same territory' (1985, 63, 65).

There were people, who because of poor harvests or other misfortune had lost their land but still had the tenancy of it and, at some time (for example the Jubilee year) had the chance to redeem it (Lev 25:25-28). Others were less fortunate and were reduced to seeking seasonal employment as day labourers (Matt 20:1-16). In such circumstances people could well become 'prisoners of worry' (Luz 1989, 1:403).That the 'do not be anxious' was not a command to forgo work is noted by Lejeune who says that 'Jesus was not advocating a quietist and passive attitude' (1990, 13; so also Marshall 1978, 527). Marshall also observes that as the birds do not work, by implication men do: Luz (1989, 1:405) takes the opposite view and sees this as 'a point of contact to those addressed, i.e. they also do not sow and gather into barns. Such conflicting interpretations raise the question, which has been left until now, 'to whom was the passage addressed?'

The Recipients of the Passage

Davies and Allison (1988-97, 1:659, n.24) suggest that the words of Matthew 6:25-34 were probably first uttered by Jesus to his closest followers and that, in Matthew, the words are then aimed at all believers. Davies and Allison continue to the effect that what was said to itinerant followers cannot be directly applied to others without

reinterpretation. One possible illustration of this is the itinerants' dependence on the hospitality of others: without those who till the soil and cook the food how are the itinerants to be fed? The ethos would then be of sharing (Oakman 1986, 169).

If by 'closest followers', however, Davies and Allison mean the 'twelve' only, this seems too narrow an audience for the use of the metaphor of agriculture for the birds/ravens and of textile-making for the flowers. Although many people had their own fields, not all were directly involved in agriculture, for example at least four of the 'twelve' were fishermen. Moreover, why would anyone have used expressions of work which were almost exclusively feminine if there had been no women present? (*m. Keb.* 5.5 'These are the kinds of labour which a woman performs for her husband: 1. grinds flour. 2. bakes bread 3. does laundry 4. prepares meals 5. feeds her child 6. makes the bed 7. works with wool). However, this did not mean that only women did weaving, cf. Jonathan the Weaver (Josephus *J.W.* 7.9.1 §437). In fact Horsley (1995, 204, 206) suggests that women probably did most of the weaving at home, but that there was also some specialised weaving done by artisans (*t. B. Meṣ.* 11.24). If, however, Davies and Allison mean a group of 'closest followers' wider than the 'twelve' and which included women, then their suggestion is probably correct that sayings of Jesus directed to the group were then directed to all believers in Matthew.

Itinerant Mendicancy and the Work Ethic

As Mealand (1980, 85) observes, the pericope '...is not simply a homily telling Galilean farmers to worry less about their crops. Nor do we have here the simple adoption of a piece of popular piety urging trust in providence'. That it is not a piece

of sapiential tradition is indicated by Catchpole (1993, 35) who points out that in this tradition, the worker is lavishly praised[6]. Theissen (1992, 292) states that 'the disciples preserved those sayings that approve a radical itinerant ethic that makes demands that are insupportable under "normal" conditions'. Earlier, Thiessen (1978, 23) had indicated that itinerant radicalism was possible only because of the material support offered by the local communities. However, by reference to the Didache (11.6) which advocated the same ethos of itinerant mendicancy, Theissen effectively argued that there were those among the early Christians who did adopt this style of living and that by carrying no purse, staff or coat, they differentiated themselves from itinerant cynic philosophers (1975, 86,88).

Crossan argues that the rationale behind the itinerancy is 'unbrokered egalitarianism', that by being atopic wanderers the disciples do not establish a brokered presence, where a system of clientage-patronage develops to the advantage of the disciples' family and village (1991, 346). It was for this reason, Crossan says, that Jesus left not only his own home, but did not stay with Peter at Capernaum. While this is a valuable insight into the rationale for itinerancy, is it the sole reason? Crossan has contrasted the method of John the Baptist, who remained in one place while the people came to him, with the method of Jesus, who with his disciples went round the country to the people. Yet, John the Baptist, the visionary and ascetic, could hardly be described as living on a system of brokerage. Moreover, in the Markan account of Jesus' ministry (which Crossan uses) Jesus is depicted as returning several times to his home country (Mark 2:1; 3:19b; 6:1). Had Mark

envisaged an avoidance of brokerage as being the only reason for Jesus' leaving in the first place, why would he have depicted Jesus as returning several times?

In contrast to the ideal of itinerant mendicancy attributed to Jesus, Paul took the traditional approach of working for his living, and in Corinth at least this was to avoid the perils of patronage (2 Cor 11:9): although he was prepared to accept help from the Macedonians (2 Cor 11:7-9). As Theissen points out, it was probably easier for an artisan to support himself than it was for many of Jesus' original followers: 'Anyone who earns his living as a farmer or fisherman gives up his livelihood when he leaves that location' (1975, 90). In 1 Thessalonians 4:11, Paul advocated working with the hands: here, Best (1972, 174-6) suggests that the customary explanation - that there were those who, anticipating an imminent Parousia, were spending time in religious preparation while neglecting their work - is the best explanation. However, he also points out that Paul wants the Christian community to be an example to 'outsiders' of good conduct. Moreover if people because of 'eschatological excitement' give up work they will be a burden to the community. That Paul did not want people being exploited by those who did not work and yet could not keep themselves is suggested by Wanamaker (1990, 163).

In discussing Matthew 6:26, Oakman (1986, 161) interprets the pericope of Mark 10:29-30 as assurance that the disciples will find that 'If "seeking the kingdom" is an act of faith leading to dependence upon the generosity of God, that generosity does not have to be without tangible mechanism...' In other words, the larger family of

God will be the means of 'tangible provision' for the smaller group of itinerant followers in the ethos of sharing.

Conclusion

We discussed the possible identity of the lilies in both versions and also the identity of the 'birds of the air' in Matthew 6:26. In this context we decided that birds of the air meant birds in general and not vultures, which is the other possible meaning in Hebrew scripture. We concluded that if any one species of flower was intended then the red anemone (*Anemone coronaria*), followed in succession by the red ranunculus (*Ranunculus asiaticus*), then the red poppy (*Papaver rheas*) seemed the most likely contender. It is also possible that lilies referred to wild flowers in general, particularly in Matthew 6:28-9. Luke on the other hand may have envisaged a single species of flower to balance raven as the single species of bird (12:24, 27).

The admonition against worry was probably first given to the closest followers who, as itinerant mendicant disciples, were to spread the good news and for whom God would provide each day's needs through the generous ethos of sharing by the settled communities (Matt 10:7-11). Those who provided the 'daily bread' for the itinerants and the poor in the community would have their reward (Matt 10:40-42). Problems arose when the message was interpreted literally by the larger and settled communities, as was evident from the situation in Thessalonica, where there were those who due to 'eschatological excitment' had given up work, yet by staying in one place had become a burden to the community. Here, there had to be a return to the traditional sapiential work ethic (Prov 10:4; 12:11). However, lest acquisition of

material goods became an end in itself, the injunctions against laying up treasures on earth and the warning that 'you cannot serve God and Mammon' (Matt 6:24c) were added to the discourse: the counterpart in Luke is the parable of the Rich Fool (12:16-21).

In essence, in both Gospels the ethos of the passages is the same: the birds of the air/ ravens do not work in the fields to produce their food, yet they are fed by providential care; the lilies do not engage in textile work but their appearance, due again to providential care, is finer than Solomon's glory. These illustrations of the birds and the flowers (or ravens and lilies) provide an *a minori* to the *ad maius* of the disciples. There is no pejorative undertone attached to the choice of raven in Luke any more than there is to the choice of lilies: they are all simply illustrations of providential care. Yet, while the provision for the birds follows the Wisdom tradition of providential care (Ps 104:10-13; Job 38:41), the provision for the disciples is in sharp contrast to the sapiential tradition of humanity working for a living (Ps 104:23; Prov 10:4). Thus those who took to the road to spread the gospel were ultimately also under providential care through the generosity of the settled communities. Finally, by the references to the birds and the flowers attributed to Jesus, there is a skilful inclusion of the rest of creation into the saying that the disciples were part of the whole *Creatio continua* in God's care. Thus a positive holistic view of the Natural World was attributed to Jesus in the Synoptic tradition.

Endnotes: The Birds of the Air and the Lilies of the Field

[1]Although Fitzmyer (1968, 417-29) in his review of the third edition of M.Black's 'An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts', makes several criticisms of Black's work, he has not commented on the section 'Alliteration, Assonance and Paronomasia' from which this citation and was taken: presumably Fitzmyer found no fault with this section. Although Derrett (1987, 191 n.26) suggests that Jesus spoke in Hebrew rather than Aramaic, it would seem more likely that the latter language was the vernacular of the common people and therefore the language which Jesus would use in speech.

[2]While *šûšan* is translated as 'lily' in Hebrew Scripture, it is actually a loan word from the Egyptian *sšn* meaning 'lotus'. BDB p.1004 attributes the idea for the derivation to Erman, (*Zeitschrift Morgenländ Geschellschaft* 1892, xivi), but the association of 'lily' in Hebrew scripture with the lotus was made almost fifty years earlier by Royle (1845, 2:764).

[3]Illustrations of these paintings can be found in: Cronin 1968, 64, illus. 33 (the Botticelli, Uffizi, Florence); Biadene 1990, 215 (the Titian, San Rocco, Venice); and Faxon. 1989, 57, pl.39 (the Rossetti 'Ecce Ancilla Domini', Tate Gallery, London).

[4]Cited in Ha-Reubeni (1947, 363). I have been unable to obtain this book.

[5]The miscellaneous suggestions were listed in Ha-Reubeni (1947,363).

[6]For a discussion on the work ethic attributed to animals in Proverbs 6:6-8 and its relation to Matthew 6:26 (and Luke 12:24) see Healey (1989, 497-8).

The Conclusion

The statement of the argument in the introduction was that in the Synoptic Tradition there was a broadly sympathetic attitude to the Living Natural World, with no *significant* difference in attitude between the Evangelists. For the purposes of the research, the Natural World was defined as that of animals (including domestic animals) and plants. The rationale behind the choice of what was to be included has already been given in the introduction. How far has the research proved the argument and are there any areas where the evidence was inconclusive?

We looked a variety of key texts, some of which appeared to view the Natural World in a positive light and some of which seemed more negative, pejorative even. In the introduction, we looked at the problem of discussing texts in which the references to the Natural World in the Synoptic tradition were very often symbolic rather than literal. The historical-critical approach allowed us to examine issues such as geographical location, economic and cultural conditions that were pertinent to the understanding of the text as well as the physical realities of the animal or plant concerned. The exegetical literary approach allowed us to examine more fully the symbolism of the text and, where appropriate, to make use of philology and text criticism.

The research dealt with a number of key texts, each of which raised several questions. For convenience, in this concluding chapter, we will repeat the questions asked at the beginning of each chapter and give the individual conclusions reached.

Although we will be giving some brief details of the arguments used in reaching the answers to the questions asked, these details are by no means comprehensive, nor do they include some of the minor issues discussed in the text. In this chapter, bibliographical references are kept to a minimum since they have already been given earlier in the text. Finally, we will give an overall conclusion to the argument. We will also indicate where there is scope for further research.

Prologue

As we indicated in the introduction, the first task was to give a descriptive framework to the thesis as a whole. If we are to discuss animals and plants, we should have some idea of their habitat. We looked at the land, its terrain and natural types of vegetation as well as at the methods of agriculture and the crops grown by the people. We also indicated any mention of such crops in scripture (for example the seven species of Deuteronomy 8:8): such references tended to be found more often in Hebrew Scripture, rather than in the New Testament. Although the prologue may not seem part of the overall argument since there is little theological discussion in it, some knowledge of the land is necessary for our understanding of the animals which inhabited it and the plants growing there.

1. 'With the Wild Animals'

The first chapter deals with the wild animals of Mark 1:13b ('he was with the wild animals'). For context we looked at Mark 1:13 as a whole and the various responses which the text has evoked such as: a paradisal motif with Jesus as the Second Adam,

an Exodus typology, a link with Elijah, and the idea of Messianic peace derived from Isaiah. We asked the following questions:

(a) Which of the various interpretations of Mark 1:13 as a whole is likely to be the correct one?

(b) How did Mark view Jesus' relationship with the wild animals? Did he envisage Jesus as regarding the animals of the desert as creatures to be avoided if not actually feared? Or did he perceive Jesus as accepting the companionship of the wild animals as part of the created world where each thing that breathes gives praise to God (Ps 150:6)?

(a) When we reviewed the various typologies suggested as background to Mark 1:13 as a whole, we found no exact parallel. Each typology reviewed lacked at least one of the elements of temptation by Satan, ministration by angels or encounter with wild animals. The closest typology was that of Elijah, who spent forty days in the wilderness (1 Kgs 19:4-8), who went through a testing period but was tested by God, not Satan (1 Kgs 19:9-18), who was ministered to by angels (1 Kgs 5-7) and, most importantly, had a positive relationship with wild creatures in the ravens who fed him (1 Kgs 17:4-6; 19:9-18). We noted that Jesus was not fed by the wild creatures, but Elijah's succour by the ravens provided a precedent for a positive relationship with wild animals. We came to the conclusion that Mark possibly did not intend any one particular typology, but that the text seemed to contain an allusion to Elijah and also to Messianic peace with the animals (Isaiah 11:6-9). We observed a similar conflation of scriptural texts elsewhere in Mark 1:2b-3 with the combination of Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3.

(b) We looked first at a comparison of attitudes to wild animals in the Jewish world with that of the Graeco-Roman. In both cultures, people hunted for food or to be rid of predators. However, the Greeks and Romans, particularly the wealthy people, hunted for sport whereas hunting was not highly regarded in the Jewish world. We did note that Herod the Great (who was of Idumaean extraction) hunted from horseback. Collections of wild animals were made for Greek and Roman menageries and later for the Roman 'games' in the arena. Collecting animals in this way does not appear to have taken place in the Jewish world (even during the time of Solomon who had the wealth required to indulge such an interest).

We looked at the various interpretations of Mark 1:13b to see if the phrase denoted hostility, neutrality or companionship on the part of the animals. The scriptural tradition has in the main been favourable to wild animals with texts that refer to the wild creatures as part of creation (Gen 1:20-25) and as being under providential care (Ps 104 *passim*). We also noted references to predators (1Sam 17:34) but observed that these animals were not hunted for sport, but only if they were a problem to flocks. Texts from the *Testament of Twelve Patriarchs* such as *T. Issach.* 7.7, *T. Naph.* 8.4 and *T. Benj.* 5.2. are often quoted in support of an interpretation that the animals were hostile. However these texts were possibly written by the same author rather than being three separate entities. Moreover Jesus is not depicted as having mastery over the animals (cf. the stilling of the storm in Mark 4:39), nor do the animals flee from him.

The word μετά in the phrase 'with the wild animals' denotes 'with' in a companionable sense. We looked at differing approaches to the idea of peace *with* the wild animals or peace *from* the wild animals in the Jewish tradition compared with the similar concept in the Graeco-Roman tradition. Peace *from* implies an absence of predators, while peace *with* suggests harmonious co-existence. In Graeco-Roman writings, there was more emphasis on peace from the wild animals yet there were some writings that suggested peaceful co-existence (Lucian *De Dea Syria* 41). In the Jewish tradition, the Messianic age denotes a return to the ideal state in Genesis when there was peace between man and the wild animals. We concluded that there was an allusion to Messianic peace with the wild animals in the phrase. Moreover, as we saw earlier, there are links with the Elijah story where Elijah had a positive relationship with wild creatures in the ravens. When we looked at 1:13b in detail we concluded the association of Jesus with the wild animals was a friendly association.

2. A Gathering of Eagles

In the second chapter, we looked at the 'eagles' saying with the two contexts of parousia (Matt 24:28) and of judgement (Luke 17:37b). At first sight this cryptic saying appears to fit neither context. We asked the following questions.

(a) Was the reference to 'eagles' a metonym for the eagle standard and thus an allusion to the Roman legions?

(b) Were the 'eagles' to be understood as real carrion eaters and if so, were they eagles or vultures?

(c) Was the saying a proverb?

(d) What was the attitude to the eagles in the saying?

(a) We examined the possibility of the saying as a metonym for the eagle standard and, as such, an allusion to the Roman Legions (Kreitzer 1996, 59-68). Although the 'eagles' were synonymous with the Roman legions in Latin writing, the only such metonymic reference in Jewish writing appears to be in the Talmud (*b. Sanh.* 12a). Such a late (fourth century) reference possibly has little relevance to a first century context. Josephus uses the word 'eagle' to refer to the standard not the legion (*J.W.* 3.6.2 §123). Since there were no Roman legions stationed in Judaea or Galilee during the first half of the first century CE, such an allusion was likely to have originated only after the first Jewish War. (We conceded the possibility of folk memory of Varus in Jerusalem 4BCE). The question of Roman legions and auxiliary units in Judaea and Galilee in the first centuries BCE and CE is discussed fully in the chapter on the Gerasene demoniac and the pigs. If the saying is to be understood as a metonym of the Roman legionary eagle standard, then it is arguable that Luke might have used this in the context of judgement after the First Jewish War. However, it is unlikely that Matthew understood it in this way in the context of the parousia. As stated earlier, we found literary evidence for such a metonym in Latin literature but not in contemporary Jewish writing. Therefore, on literary and historical evidence, we thought this theory was unlikely.

(b) We looked also at the question of what was to be understood by ἀετός */nešer* and discussed the various species which might be subsumed under the term generically. When the term is understood specifically, it is usually (although not

always) the griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) which is involved. After discussing the suggested dichotomy between eagle and vulture by Jeremias (1972, 162 n.46) and Lachs (1987, 321), we decided against this division, since eagles eat carrion as well as prey which they have killed, and certain species of vulture also eat live prey.

(c) We looked at the possibility of the saying as allegory but after looking at the wide range of the various allegorical interpretations, we decided that the saying was never intended as allegory. Although many commentators argue that visibility is the keynote of the saying, visibility suits only the context of parousia in Matthew, but not that of judgement in Luke. Instead, we came to the conclusion that the saying was a maxim expressing *certainty.* Here the saying would be understood like our 'where there's smoke, there's fire'. Understood in this way, the saying fits both contexts, i.e. the certainty of the parousia and the certainty of judgement.

(d) We also looked at references to the 'eagle/vulture' in the Hebrew Scriptures. Here we found that the 'eagle/vulture' was used as a expression of God's power and parental care of the people of Israel (Exod 19:4; Deut 32:11) and yet was at the head of the list of proscribed birds in Leviticus 11:13. It was also used in an observation from nature in Job 39:27-30 in the context of God's (not humanity's) care of and control of the Natural World. Certainly, it is the less attractive aspect of the bird as a carrion eater which is found in the saying in Matthew 24:28 (and Luke 17:37b), yet the bird's uncleanness relates only to its being proscribed as food. We concluded that the saying in both versions was a maxim that was, like the passage in Job, an observation of the birds' attributes with no pejorative implication towards the birds.

In any case a maxim is used principally for its aptness to the point at issue. Here, although the saying was used in different contexts, there was no difference in attitude to the birds themselves between the two versions in Matthew and Luke.

3. The Dogs: Pets, Puppies or Pariahs?

The next chapter looks at dogs in the episode of the Syrophoenician woman, who asks Jesus for help for her daughter (Mark 7:24-30; Matt 15:21-28). In the exchange of request and reply, the references to the dogs are in a figurative sense (the dogs represent gentiles). This episode (from the point of view of the thesis) raised the following questions:

(a) Is this incident indicative of a separate mission to the gentiles?

(b) Are the dogs to be understood as pet dogs, as the puppies of working dogs or as scavenging pariahs?

(c) Is there a difference in attitude to dogs to be found in comparing the statement attributed to Jesus and the reply attributed to the Syrophoenician woman?

(a) We looked at the question of a separate mission to the gentiles. After looking at other relevant texts (for example the feeding of the four thousand [Mark 8:1-9], which some hold to be part of a separate gentile mission) we came to the conclusion that there was insufficient evidence for a separate gentile mission in Mark. When Mark depicted Jesus as visiting predominantly gentile territory, he may have wanted to show that Jesus, when visiting Jewish people in such areas, was prepared on occasion to extend his ministry to gentiles. In Matthew, the mission to the gentiles is generally regarded as post-Easter. However, Jesus is shown on occasion to extend

help to gentiles such as the Syrophoenician woman and the centurion's child/servant (Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10).

(b) We looked at the meaning(s) of κυνάριον and discussed diminutives in Aramaic as well as in Greek. After discussing the probable language of the exchange, we considered that the most likely explanation was that the exchange took place in Aramaic and that the diminutive originated with the woman, (see below) and was then transferred back into Jesus' reply.

(c) We examined the probable attitudes of the Syrophoenician woman and of Jesus to dogs from each cultural perspective. Here, we found that dogs were held in greater esteem in the Graeco-Roman world than in the Jewish world. For example, in both Greece and Rome, dogs were kept as pets as well as being used in hunting, and as guard dogs for flocks and farms. In the Jewish world, dogs were kept for guarding flocks and homes. As we saw in the chapter on wild animals, in the Jewish world, hunting was carried out for food or to be rid of a predator, not for sport. After examining relevant texts in Scripture and in Rabbinic writings, we found no evidence that dogs were kept as pets by the Jews. Although, the dog was not regarded highly in the Jewish world, the animals were kept as guard dogs for the precious flocks. The only dogs likely to be found indoors in a Jewish household would be the puppies of guard dogs. Nevertheless, the dog's qualities of fidelity were recognised in later Rabbinic writings. Thus, in the exchange as it is depicted between Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman, there is a difference in cultural perspective. The evangelists were aware that Jesus was likely to have been accustomed to seeing guard dogs (and

sheep dogs) only out of doors. The woman may have had pet dogs in her home, and as the mention of 'table' is attributed to her, it is likely that she envisaged the dogs as being housedogs, possibly pets. Therefore in both versions of the story the woman is likely to have the more favourable attitude to the dogs. Although there were differences in the approach to gentiles in the two Gospels in that there is more evidence for a pro-gentile attitude in Mark, than in Matthew, there seems to have been no difference in the implied attitude to the dogs.

4. The Demon Legion and the Pigs

This chapter looks at the strange and disturbing episode of the Gerasene demoniac and the mass destruction of the pigs Mark 5:1-20; Matt 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-33). Of all the texts dealing with the Natural World in the New Testament, this must be the most controversial. We addressed the following questions:

(a) Is this incident as it is depicted with the deaths of two thousand sentient animals compatible with the more familiar Synoptic image of Jesus as compassionate?

(b) How are we to understand the destruction of the pigs and the reference to 'Legion' (Mark 5:9)?

(a) In order to answer these questions, we have first to answer those of (b). Initially, however, we looked at the structure of the story as it is told in Mark, partly because Mark gives the fullest version and partly because Mark's is the earliest of the three Synoptic Gospels. Where there were relevant differences in the versions in Matthew and Luke, we discussed these (for example there are two demoniacs in Matthew). There is a consensus that the story, as it is found in Mark, shows signs of later

additions. When we compared the Markan pericope with the story of the man with the unclean spirit in the synagogue (Mark 1:23-28) we found it was possible to arrive at a 'kernel' of the Gerasene story. (We gave the caveat about its being only a possibility). In this kernel the pigs act as an indicator of the mainly gentile nature of the area. Although the Decapolis was a mainly gentile area, the population was mixed. We made the point that Jesus may in fact have entered the territory in order to visit Jewish people there.

(b) We discussed 'Legion' and came to the conclusion that it was an allusion to the Romans (so also Theissen 1983, 255). Although there may have been folk memory of the legion in Jerusalem under Varus in 4 BCE, the most likely time for the allusion to have been added to the story was at the time of the First Jewish War. Although there were four legions in Syria, there were no legions stationed in Galilee or Judaea during the first half of the first century CE (local auxiliary forces were used instead). We left open the question whether the addition was pre-Markan or not.

Following Jeremias (1958, 31 n.5) we argued that the herdsmen were included to provide witnesses to the exorcism. We also argued that the pigs were initially included solely to indicate that the exorcism took place on mainly gentile territory and that the destruction of the pigs, like the mention of 'Legion', was a later addition to the story. We conceded that, if this interpretation was correct, it was an unusual instance of polemicism against the Romans in Mark, since elsewhere this Gospel has a pro-gentile tendency.

(a) We concluded that the destruction of the pigs as told in the story was 'wish fulfilment' for the land to be cleared of the Roman presence and was unlikely to have been part of the very early oral tradition. After discussing pig behaviour with an acknowledged expert (Professor Whittemore has herded pigs in semi-wild conditions), we concluded that the story of the pigs lacks ethological probability. Since elsewhere in the accounts of exorcism, Jesus is not depicted as sending evil spirits/demons into other living creatures, we concluded that this account was a combination of an earlier exorcism, in which the pigs had simply been an indicator of the location's being predominantly gentile, with a wish fulfilment story of ridding the land of an unwanted presence. The reference to the drowning of the pigs is a symbolic story and unlikely ever to have been a literal truth.

5. Erring Goats and Errant Sheep

In this chapter we looked at attitudes to domestic animals, namely sheep and goats. Here we looked at two texts, first at the 'division of sheep and goats' (Matt 25:32-33) then at the 'lost sheep' (Matt 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7). We also included an excursus that dealt with the issue of sacrifice. We asked the following questions:

(a) Is the negative aspect attributed parabolically to the goat (Matt 25:32-3) indicative of the attitude to the animal in reality?

(b) Given that the sheep was often used as metaphor for people, what does the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7; Matt 18: 12-14) indicate of attitudes to living animals and their care?

(a) This is the one reference to goats in the Synoptic Gospels and is found only in Matthew. It is possible that the pericope with the illustration of the sheep and goats is Matthean composition, yet there may have been a vestige of an earlier parable in the illustration. The lists of mercies shown seem less radical than some of the exhortations attributed to Jesus elsewhere such as 'love your enemies' (Matt 5:44: Luke 6:27). We looked at various reasons for the literal separation of sheep and goats and concluded that the most likely reason was for the provision of the animals' needs: i.e. a cooler daytime environment for the sheep and a warmer night-time environment for the goats. We also concluded that behavioural differences between the two species suggested the negative / positive symbolism of the eschatological division of people. However, this symbolism ends with the division of the animals. We then reviewed the context of final judgement. Although in Hebrew Scripture, on the Day of Atonement, it was a goat which was driven into the wilderness to carry away the sins of the people (Lev 16:21-22), both kids and lambs were used as sin offerings (Lev 5:6). Therefore there does not appear to have been a pejorative use of goats over and against sheep in Hebrew Scripture. Indeed, the use of the illustration of the shepherd's separation of the sheep and the goats shows knowledge of pastoral concerns for the welfare of the animals.

(b) We looked at the background of pastoralism in the country, the various breeds kept, and briefly at some of the biblical texts in Hebrew Scripture pertaining to sheep. We noted that Matthew is particularly fond of the sheep metaphor (i.e. sheep as people) which is found throughout the Gospel. In discussing the two contexts of the story of the lost sheep, we left open the question if one version was earlier than

the other. We also concluded that Mark possibly did not have this story in the sources available to him. In a literal sense, the sheep was an extremely important animal since it provided milk and wool. (Meat was for most Jewish people a luxury item, consumed generally after feast days only.) In a figurative sense the sheep was also extremely important as it was used throughout Hebrew Scripture as a metaphor of the people of Israel with God as shepherd. In the parable of the lost sheep, the importance of the individual whether as sheep or as human being is stressed. The context in Matthew is the community of the early church with a 'stray member': the context in Luke is table fellowship with the 'stray sinner'. The parable reflected actual practice, the remaining sheep would be left safely in the fold (or in the care of a fellow shepherd) and a lost individual would be sought.

Both of these pericopae – the division of the sheep and the goats (Matt 25:32-33) and the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-6; Matt 18:12-14) display knowledge of pastoral care of domestic animals. In the case of the division of the sheep and the goats, the literal separation is for the *welfare* of the animals. In the case of the lost sheep, the emphasis is on the importance of the individual animal. In both instances the Synoptic Jesus is shown as using examples from pastoral life to illustrate his teaching. It may be argued that such illustrations may have been commonplace among country-dwelling people, yet it is surely significant that in both cases (implicitly in the first, explicitly in the second) the important factor is care of the animals concerned. This concern will be shown even more clearly in the next chapter.

Excursus One

Here we looked at sacrifice and the figure of the *Kriophoros* and asked if in the image of the Good Shepherd, there was a similar darker image of sacrifice?

We gave a very brief overview of attitudes to sacrifice in Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament. We also looked at the method of ritual slaughter (*shechitah*) and the possibility that there was a humanitarian ethic involved (*b. Ḥul* 27a; *b. Ket 37b*). We discussed briefly the citation and interpretation of Hosea 6:6 in Matthew 9:13; 12:7 (cf. Mark 1:44). We concluded that, while it was debatable if Matthew saw Jesus as being against animal sacrifice *per se*, he at least saw Jesus as being in line with the prophetic denunciation of sacrifice without love shown to others. After looking at the changing role of the shepherd in Luke 15:5 and John 10:11 where, in the latter we saw that the shepherd is prepared to give his life for his sheep, we observed that in Revelation 5:6, the image had changed again, with the shepherd becoming the sacrificial lamb. We concluded that there was such an underlying image of sacrifice.

6. The Animal in the Pit

One of the few instances in the Synoptic Gospels of a reference to a real animal is to the one that falls into a pit on the Sabbath (Matt 12:11; Luke 14:5). Here, we asked:

(a) In view of the various prohibitions regarding activity on the Sabbath, what were the prevalent attitudes to animals in relation to these?

(b) In comparison with these attitudes how is Jesus portrayed in relation to the working animals?

(a) We looked at the various sources: the writings at Qumran, in Rabbinic literature and in Hebrew scripture. We found that there were differing interpretations of the relevant texts. At Qumran the rulings were certainly stricter as the animal would have been left in the pit according to the Damascus Document (CD 11.13, 16-17). In later Rabbinic writings, there were two rulings; one allowed the animal to be helped from the pit, the other permitted only food and water to be given (*b. Šabb.* 128b). In Torah, Sabbath rest was given to animals as well as to people (Exod 23:12). Provision was made for animals to be led to water on the Sabbath (*m. ʿErub.* 2.1-4). Hebrew scripture also gave rise to two important concepts: 'the avoidance of animal suffering' (*ṣa'ar baʿalê ḥayyim*) derived from Exodus 23:4-5; and the *ṣadiq* 'the righteous man' such as Noah or Joseph (*Tan. Noah 3*) who cared for animals as well as people derived from (Prov 12:10). However, it appears to have been the practice that people would regard the care of the animal as being above the concern for the Sabbath. We also concluded that this was not due solely to economic concerns, but to a genuine regard for the welfare of the animal – 'the avoidance of animal suffering'.

Matthew's casualty is a sheep (in keeping with his fondness for the sheep metaphor). Luke's two victims are the subjects of a text critical discussion. We decided eventually that the reading should be 'ass or ox'.

(b) First of all, the argument attributed to Jesus is a *qal wahomer* that if it is good to help an animal on Sabbath, it is also good to help a human being whether the condition is life-threatening or not. As a *qal wahomer* starts with an *accepted* given it is taken for granted that the animal will be helped. Secondly the animal is actually

rescued from the pit in the argument attributed to Jesus. Had the underlying reasoning been merely of economic necessity to preserve the animal's life then the farmer could simply have left food and water and removed the casualty the following day, as it would not have been working on the Sabbath in any case. That there is an actual rescue in the argument attributed to Jesus would indicate that Jesus was seen as taking the most positive of the possible attitudes towards the scenario of an animal in distress.

Excursus Two

Over all, there was a tradition in Hebrew Scripture of concern for the working animals, which we examined in Excursus two. We looked at Deuteronomy 25:4 as a text representative of others (such as Deuteronomy 22:10) where arguably there were laws to protect working animals. We concluded that it was not possible to determine exactly what was in the minds of the Deuteronomic writers when they issued such decrees. Paul, on the other hand, regarded it in a figurative light, when he was writing from the perspective of the apostle maintaining the apostle's rights (which he himself had forsworn). Yet Deuteronomy 25:4 was certainly interpreted as a humanitarian issue by Philo and Josephus, neither of whom had any special reason to introduce a motif of compassion. It is worthy of note also that Philo, who frequently gives an allegorical interpretation when he discusses scripture, should have decided to interpret this text literally. Moreover, it should be remembered that those who obeyed these decrees would stand in a righteous relationship with God.

7. The Palm Sunday Colt

In the accounts of the entry into Jerusalem, we find the only canonical instance of Jesus being depicted with a living animal. We looked at the story in Mark 11: 2-3.

(a) What do the accounts tell us of the way in which Jesus was perceived with regard to an animal that was temporarily, at least, in his care?

(b) What were the reasons for the choice of the animal?

(c) Was the animal in question, indeed a donkey colt that had not been ridden previously?

We answered the questions in reverse order.

(c)On linguistic and logical grounds we decided that the animal in question was not a horse. Such a valuable animal would not have been left unattended and the horse was also associated with war. Moreover, the arguments for the animal's being a horse (based on usage of the word πῶλος in LXX) started from the premise that Genesis 49:21 refers to two animals: in fact the text is an instance of poetic parallelism, where both lines refer to the colt of an ass.

(b) Here, as well as the Synoptic versions of the entry into Jerusalem, we also looked briefly at some relevant details of the incident in John. We assume some historical core to the story. We concluded that whatever the entry meant to the bystanders (and Messianic undertones may have been realised only later), the choice of the ass indicated that Jesus was coming in peace. Matthew's version was the most difficult since it involved two animals, the colt and its mother. As Matthew's account explicitly links the entry with Zechariah 9:9, Matthew has envisaged the ass as the

symbolic mount of a king coming in peace. (The horse was the symbol of war, as already noted). Although neither Mark nor Luke refer explicitly to Zechariah 9:9, there may be an allusion to this passage in their respective references to the colt as one 'on which no one has yet sat' (Luke 19:35; Mark 11:2).

(a) Most importantly from the point of view of our argument, we discussed the meaning of the words 'and he will return it immediately' (Mark 11:3). This phrase may be understood as a promise to the owner to return the animal as a piece of property. Yet implicit also is the understanding that the colt will be returned to prevent its being lost in the tumult of a crowded city, and perhaps coming to harm without access to fodder and water. If this interpretation is correct then it is an instance of Jesus being depicted as showing concern for an individual animal in the Gospels. Such concern for the welfare of an animal is consistent with the principle of 'the avoidance of animal suffering' derived from Torah. It is also consistent with the concept of the 'righteous man' who has regard for the life of his beast (Prov 12:10).

8. The Forgotten Sparrow

In the saying concerning the sparrows (Luke 12:6; Matt 10:29) there is a difference in the wording. The Lukan version says 'And not one of them is forgotten before God'. The Matthean version has 'and not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will'. The context is one of persecution and martyrdom. The short sayings raise the following questions.

(a) What are we to understand by 'not forgotten before God' and 'not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will'? Do the two variants show a marked difference in attitude to the sparrows themselves?

(b) Does the context of persecution refer to a post Easter situation only?

(a) There is no theological implication in the different numbers of sparrows, or in the prices at which they were sold, in the two versions. We looked at other texts and references to birds and discussed the likely species to be subsumed generically under 'sparrow'. We also looked at the attitudes to seed-eating birds in an agricultural situation. After looking at various interpretations of 'without your father' (Matt 10:29b), it seems 'without your father's knowledge and consent' is the most likely. After comparing the two versions in Matthew and Luke, we concluded that there was a nuance more of concern for the sparrows in the Lukan version. Although we found it was not possible to determine which was the earlier version of the two sayings, we concluded that the Lukan version with its slightly stronger emphasis on divine care, was probably closer to the *ipssissima vox* of Jesus.

(b) The context of persecution and martyrdom at first suggests a post Easter setting. The death of John the Baptist provided a precedent for the execution of a religious leader during the lifetime of Jesus. Large followings may have led to a fear of sedition (Josephus *Ant.* 18.5.2 §116-9). Although there is no evidence that John the Baptist's followers were persecuted (and we mentioned the possibility that Jesus had been a disciple of John), the likelihood of persecution even martyrdom, for any who continued his teaching after him may also have been foreseen. Certainly, some of the

the passion prediction texts owe their detail to hindsight after the Easter event. Those who faced persecution would be continuing in the tradition of those who suffered martyrdom rather than become apostates (2 Macc 6:18-31; 4 Macc 8-17:1). If this is the case, then it is possible that the references to the divine interest in the insignificant sparrows (the cheapest form of flesh in the market) may reflect a pre-Easter situation. In any case both Matthew and Luke have depicted Jesus as speaking compassionately about a few dead birds in the context of human suffering.

9. The Withered Fig-tree

In discussing the strange episode of the cursing of the barren fig-tree (Mark 11:14,20; Matt 21:21), we asked the following questions:

(a) How are we to understand this strange story?

(b) Why is Jesus portrayed as cursing a living tree for not having fruit when 'it was not the season for figs'?

(c) If we are to understand the story as symbolic, how is the symbolism of the withered tree to be interpreted? Does the tree stand for the Temple, for Jerusalem, for the Jewish people as a whole or is there another form of symbolism here?

(a) Here we looked first at the fig-tree as a literal entity and reviewed the growth and cultivation of the tree. We found that we could establish a rationale for the tree's being in leaf, but without fruit, and that we could also establish a rationale for the sudden withering. Nevertheless, we decided that it was intended that the story was to be understood symbolically.

(b) We looked at the possible Aramaic of the cursing and also at the two Greek versions. We viewed the possibility of a mistranslation from the Aramaic with extreme caution, but noted that in the Matthean version, some witnesses appear to render the words as prophecy rather than imprecation.

(c) Here, we compared the ways in which Mark and Matthew respectively had set out the story. In Mark, the cleansing of the Temple is placed between the cursing and the withering which suggests that there is a link between the Temple and the tree. Since Jesus is depicted as returning to the Temple after the withering of the fig-tree, it would appear that Mark intends to show that Jesus does not condemn worship at the Temple itself, but rather elements of the cultus plus the religious leaders whom he has encountered. Thus Mark has used the barrenness of the fig-tree to symbolise the condemnation of the cultus and the religious authorities, and has used the withering of the tree to symbolise the eventual fate of the Temple.

In Matthew's version, the cursing and withering happen on the same day. Again, the fact that Jesus is shown as returning to the Temple afterwards would also indicate that the indictment is of aspects of the cultus and the insistence on outward forms of worship condemned elsewhere in Matthew (12:1-7; 15:1-9; 23:1-7). Although Matthew has related the story of the fig-tree to the lesson on faith and prayer more closely than Mark has done, the likelihood is that the references to prayer form a collection which was attached to the story of the fig-tree.

Looking at the story of the barren fig-tree in Luke 13:8-9, where the tree receives a stay of execution, we observed that this story is more in keeping with the nature of Jesus as generally depicted. Since the story in Mark might be interpreted in a way which would offer no hope to the Jewish people, Luke omitted it and used the version of the fig-tree in the vineyard.

Although both Matthew and Mark have used this strange story, the single negative miracle in the Gospels, we can only surmise why it was used. One possible explanation is that the story was created by a pre-Markan author to depict the cleansing of the Temple as a pronouncement of doom rather than as a call to reform. If this is correct then it was likely to have been composed during the First Jewish War. It is also possible that, in the early tradition, Jesus used the comparison of a diseased and doomed tree with those who failed to show the fruits of righteousness, and that the story was expanded by either Mark or a pre-Markan author. We simply do not know. What is certain is that the story is to be understood symbolically, and against the background of the fall of Jerusalem with the loss of many of its inhabitants and the destruction of the Temple which symbolised much of what was dear to the Jewish people. Against such a background, for the evangelists the fate of one tree was of little significance.

However, the negative symbolism of the fig-tree is outweighed in the Gospels by the more positive symbolism, such as that of the sheep (Luke 15:4-6; Matt 18:12-13). Moreover, as we saw in the following chapter on providential care (Matt 6:26-30;

Luke 12:22-28), there is an undoubted positive affirmation of the natural world, which is more in keeping with the image of Jesus usually found in the Gospels.

10. The Birds of the Air and the Lilies of the Field

Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them (Matt 6:26).

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these (Matt 6:28-9).

These two memorable passages and the Lukan parallels (12:24-27) raise several questions which may be grouped into three sets of questions.

(a) What was the overall purpose of the illustrations and the admonition 'do not be anxious' (Matt 6:25; Luke 12:22)? Is it a warning against anxiety, or against greed and a preoccupation with the material? Is it in fact more than an admonition concerning attitude, but an implied command to renounce possessions or even to forgo work?

(b) To whom was the admonition addressed? Was it the Twelve, or a slightly wider group of followers or to the community at large?

(c) What is meant by the 'birds of the air' or 'ravens'? What is meant by 'lilies'?

In the text, we answered question (c) first. There seemed little doubt of the identity of Luke's raven (*Corvus corax*) which also appears in Hebrew Scripture in relation to providential care (Job 38:41). The identity of the 'birds of the air' has not aroused the

amount of interest, which the identity of the 'lilies' has engendered. We argued that Derrett's suggestion (1985, 223) that the phrase referred to vultures in Hebrew Scripture, was true in some instances (2 Sam 21:10) but not in others where the expression simply means 'birds' in general (Eccl 10:20). We decided that here, the phrase referred to birds in general. In the context of the Matthean saying (with its Lukan parallel), the reference indicates that the birds are concerned with the day's needs only. After some discussion of the variety of suggestions for the flower, we concluded that if any one species was intended then the suggestion of the anemone (*Anemone coronaria*) followed in succession by red ranunculus (*Ranunculus asiaticus*), then red poppies (*Papaver rhaeas*) seemed the most likely. It is also possible that the word 'lily' may have referred to wild flowers in general. One further possibility is that in Luke, 'lilies' may denote one species of flower, just as 'ravens' denotes one species of bird. In Matthew, on the other hand, 'lilies of the field' may refer to flowers in a generic sense, just as the 'birds of the air' refers to birds in this way. In any case, the point was that the flowers did nothing to achieve their beauty (Fitzmyer 1981-5, 2:979). Since the birds/ravens are, like the flowers, an illustration of providential care in the Wisdom tradition, there is no pejorative undertone in the choice of raven by Luke.

(a) We concluded that the basic premise of the admonition was to trust in providential care; but how was this to be effected? We looked at the situation of the closest followers as itinerant mendicants, at Paul's work ethic and, for comparison, the situation in 1 Thessalonians 4:11. Itinerant mendicants were dependent on the good-will of others, for if others did not tend flock and field and prepare meals how

were the mendicants to be fed? Paul's work ethic by contrast followed the sapiential work ethic (as the care sayings did not). For Paul it was a matter of pride not to be reliant upon others (Acts 18:3; 1 Cor 4:12; 2 Cor 11:9). In the situation in Thessalonica, however, a problem arose when people expecting the parousia, gave up work and became a burden on the settled community. Which brings us to question (b).

(b) We concluded that originally the references to relying on providential care were aimed at the closest followers. Here, with the allusions to the mainly (but not exclusively) feminine tasks of textile work, we thought that the followers may also have included women (Luke 8:2-3) and so the saying was aimed at a slightly larger group than the Twelve. This group of followers was to rely on an ethos of sharing in the settled community. Here, providential care would be given through the medium of other people's generosity. Problems arose when because of an expectation of the parousia, people in the community gave up work and, by staying in one place, became a burden on others. Here, there had to be a return to the traditional sapiential work ethic (Prov 10:4; 12:11). However, lest acquisition of material goods became an end in itself, the injunctions against laying up treasures on earth and the warning that you cannot serve God and Mammon (Matt 6:24c) were added to the discourse: the counterpart in Luke being the parable of the 'rich fool' (12:16-21). Finally, by the references to the birds and flowers attributed to Jesus, there is a skilful inclusion of the rest of creation into the saying that the disciples were part of the whole *Creatio continua* in God's care.

General Conclusion

Now that we have surveyed each chapter in turn, what is the overall conclusion? Have the findings of each chapter confirmed our argument that, in the Synoptic Tradition, Jesus is portrayed as having a broadly sympathetic attitude to the Natural world and that there was no *significant* difference in the Gospels in the way he was portrayed in this respect?

The Welfare of Domestic Animals

In some areas, there are no surprises. The attitudes shown towards domestic animals in the Synoptic tradition are consistent with what we might expect from some one who had lived in an agricultural society. As we have seen, there was a traditional ethos of care shown to working and domestic animals in Hebrew Scripture. The sapiential 'A righteous man has regard for the life of his beast' (Prov 12:10) suggests that such concern was not only for the sake of the animal, but was also an intrinsic part of that combination of qualities which constituted 'righteousness'. This particular aspect of 'righteousness' was shown by the patriarchs (Gen 33:13-14) and featured in the detail of Rebekah (Gen 24:19-20). It was also esteemed in later Rabbinic writing where the term *ṣadîq* is applied to those who displayed concern for the welfare of animals as well as of people (*Tan. Noah* 3).

In Torah, the Sabbath rest was also given to animals (Exod 20:9) and there seems no reason to doubt that this was put into effect. Other passages in Torah which mention animals, such as the injunction against ploughing with an ox and ass together (Deut 22:10) are regarded by many people as relating only to the welfare of

the animal itself (Webb 1998, 21-22; Regenstein 1991, 21; cf. Murray 1992, 118-9). However, as we saw in the discussion of Deuteronomy 25:4 (Excursus three) there were other possible reasons for the Deuteronomic writers to have included such passages in Torah and these possibilities were taken into consideration and discussed. We noted that Paul, for didactic purposes of his own, had taken an allegorical approach to Deuteronomy 25:4. Nevertheless, with regard to the animals, it is even more worthy of consideration that writers like Josephus and Philo interpreted such Deuteronomic writings as referring to the welfare of the animal. This in itself suggests that such an interpretation had long since become common practice and that, whatever the original intention of the writers of Deuteronomy, these texts were interpreted literally as pertaining to the welfare of the animals. This was certainly the case by the first century CE. Therefore, the evangelists knew that Jesus would be well aware of an established code of conduct based on Torah that was in common practice towards domestic and working animals during his lifetime.

The Synoptic references to domestic animals are indicative of someone who was not only aware of their importance to the farmer and shepherd, but who also perceived the animal as an individual. We saw that the animals were looked upon with a humane attitude, an attitude that did not see an animal solely in terms of economic value, but also as a sentient creature. That much of the humaneness is implicit rather than explicit must be conceded. However, this may be indicative of a stance which takes compassion towards the animal as a given, rather than as something to be stated explicitly. In several instances of the *qal wahomer* argument

employed in the Synoptic tradition, the argument starts with a given precept of a humane approach to domestic animals.

Animals as the *a Minori* in *Qal Wahomer* arguments

Very often Jesus is depicted as using such a precept in a *qal wahomer* argument. This type of argument starts with an accepted principle in order to argue an extension of that principle. For example, it is accepted that people take their animals to pasture and to water on the Sabbath (Luke 13:15), therefore it should also be accepted that a man or woman may be healed on the Sabbath (whether the illness is life threatening or not). In a similar situation of healing on the Sabbath (Matt 12:11; Luke 14:5) it is accepted that people would remove an animal from a pit into which it had fallen. The underlying assumption of the first stated principle is that people *do* act in this way, and that it is right for them to do so. There is never any suggestion of a reversal of the argument, along the lines of: 'If you think people should not be healed on the Sabbath (if the illness is not life threatening) then you should not rescue an animal which has fallen into a pit on the Sabbath.' Instead the argument is the positive: 'Yes, take the animal out of the pit, but also allow people to be healed'. Moreover, the argument attributed to Jesus presumes that the animal is rescued from the pit, and not merely fed and watered (*b. Šabb.* 128b). Therefore, there was an accepted ethos of care for working and other domestic animals which overrode Sabbatical concerns: this was an ethos that in the Synoptic tradition was accepted and approved by Jesus. The argument attributed to Jesus was that the overriding of Sabbatical concerns should also be extended to the healing of non-life threatening conditions for people.

The *qal wahomer* argument is also used of wild creatures (Matt 6:26, 28; Luke 12:24, 27). God provides the ravens (or the birds of the air) with their food, the lilies with their apparel, so the followers will also be provided with their daily needs providentially through the generosity of others. Again, it is an accepted precept in Hebrew Scripture that the creatures will be fed (Job 38:41; Ps 104:10-11, 14, 21, 27-28). The implication is that, even though to people the creatures may seem unclean (Lev 11:15) or the plants seem ephemeral (Isa 40:7), they matter to God. The *qal wahomer* states the accepted and positive care of the creatures as affirmation of the care of people. Therefore it is a known principle that as God cares for creation, so creation matters: 'And God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good' (Gen 1:31).

Much of the Synoptic imagery in parable, aphorism and maxim is drawn from the living Natural World and also from agriculture and pastoralism. Often an animal represents a quality or facet of humanity: for example, the sheep represents vulnerability, while the ass (as a riding animal) represents peace. The illustration of the division of the sheep and the goats for their individual needs also shows a knowledge of pastoral care and, by implication, an interest in such matters. It might have been expected that Jesus as a carpenter, or at least as the son of a carpenter (Mark 6:3; Matt 13:55) would have been portrayed as using most of his imagery from this work. Indeed, some imagery is drawn from the world of building: 'the splinter' and 'the beam' (Matt 7:3-5) and the house without foundation (Luke 6:49). The reference to the yoke (Matt 11:30) however, may have been drawn from the image of the yoke of the law (*m. 'Abot* 3.5) rather than have been an example drawn

from trade (cf. Justin Martyr *Dial.* 88, where Jesus is described as making ploughs and yokes). Instead, in all three Synoptic Gospels, much of the imagery is drawn from the Natural World. If this imagery comes from the oral tradition of sayings kept by the early followers of Jesus, then this is surely indicative of someone who cared for the world of creature and plant. If it is redactional, then we have an image of Jesus as he was perceived by those who first wrote down his teachings. In either case, the number of references to the Natural World (including those of domestic animals) suggests that the evangelists visualised Jesus as using at least some of such imagery in his teaching.

Comparison of Attitudes to Animals in the Three Gospels

In the three Gospels, as Goulder has pointed out, Matthew has most of the imagery involving animals, but Matthew's is a more symbolic usage, where the animal often represents some facet of human behaviour (1974, 101). Luke also uses the symbolism, but in such a way that we are left with the impression that Luke is more aware of the animal behind the symbolism. Thus, it may be argued that there are nuances in the versions, which suggest that in Luke's versions there is more awareness of the animal as a sentient being. In the reference to the sparrows (Luke 12:6; Matt 10:29), there is a shade perhaps more of compassion in the Lukan version that the sparrows are not 'forgotten', than in the Matthean emphasis of things happening with the knowledge of God.

The Lukan awareness of the animal behind the symbolism is also to be found in the parable of the lost sheep where the sheep is found in Luke and is brought home with

rejoicing (15:5). In Matthew, we are not certain that the sheep is found (18:13). However, and the distinction is an important one, for all that Luke's versions show more awareness of the animal behind the symbolism, there is no implicit difference in attitude towards the animal itself. For example, in the above story of the lost sheep where the animal is not necessarily found in Matthew, this is no indication that Matthew's version depicts a less caring attitude towards the animal, but rather that, in the context, Matthew's concentration is on the human being represented by the animal: 'So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish' (18:14). Conversely, in the story of the destruction of the pigs (Matt 8:30-32; Luke 8:32-33; Mark 5:12-13) there is no evidence that any one of the evangelists regarded pigs in either a more favourable or less favourable light than the other evangelists did. We will be returning to the pigs later.

In comparison with Luke and Matthew, Mark has fewer references to animals. Although it may be argued that this was because he had less interest in preserving these particular traditions, it is also possible (perhaps even more likely) that he had fewer of such traditions in his sources. Certainly, as we saw in the Markan version of the entry into Jerusalem, there is the promise to return the colt 'immediately' (Mark 11:3). As we observed, this promise may have been due to some concern for the well-being of the colt itself, as well as for the animal as property: this would then be an instance in which Jesus is depicted as having a specific concern for an individual animal. With regard to wild animals, it is of course Mark who mentions the wild animals in the company of Jesus in the wilderness (Mark 1:13). Here, as we have seen, although there were other possible interpretations of the phrase 'and he was

with the wild animals', the most likely interpretation is that of peaceable companionship, possibly even messianic peace (Isa 11:1-9), (so Bauckham 1994, 19). As we have already argued in the text, the differences in the various accounts, which we have examined, do not indicate any significant difference in the portrayal of Jesus and his attitudes to the Natural World.

The Underlying Ethos

As we have seen, imagery involving animals took various forms: parable, aphorism, allegory, metaphor and simile. What was the underlying ethos, the guiding principle in all of these forms of symbolism? Underneath the symbolism, the underlying attitudes are essentially the same in all three Gospels. Domestic animals were to be cared for according to ethical principles, derived from Torah and the sapiential writings, which were also contained in later rabbinic writings. Following in the tradition of Wisdom literature and the Psalms, wild animals were regarded as part of God's creation and under providential care. In Mark at least, there was to be peace with the wild animals (1:13). References to specific wild creatures reflect observations of their natural behaviour such as the eagles/vultures gathering at a carcass (Matt 24:28; Luke 17:37). Here the reference was used as a maxim and was more neutral in character. Although wolves as predators of sheep are mentioned several times, in the Synoptic tradition there is no mention of their being hunted. In the Mishnah, wolves, like lions and bears, were condemned to death only for killing people (*m. Sanh.* 1.4). Dogs, however, were on the borderline between wild and domestic animals and would not normally be part of a Jewish household, although

they were used as guard dogs. In both Mark (7:27) and Matthew (15:26), they have a rather lowly status and are on the periphery of domesticity.

The Gerasene Pigs

So far in our general conclusion, the evidence would suggest that Jesus is portrayed as having a *broadly* sympathetic view towards the Living Natural World. The one glaring exception to the general picture, is of course the pericope on the Gerasene pigs (Mark 5:1-20; Matt 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39). This was discussed extensively in the text and the symbolism expounded. Here, it must be conceded that none of the evangelists appeared to show any concern for the animals, but, again, the story is apocryphal. An ox may fall into a pit, a sheep become lost, vultures gather round a carcass, a donkey carry a man, dogs eat crumbs fallen from a table, sparrows be sold in the marketplace, ravens find their daily food, lilies be beautiful, and even a fig tree may suddenly wither. All of these are possibilities drawn from the everyday world. The mass destruction of the pigs is an apocryphon with no counterpart in the everyday world. Here, symbolism has done a disservice to the Natural World in that it gives the impression that the animals were of no account. Yet, as we have seen, the probability is that the pigs represented the Roman legions, which were to be removed from the land in a wish fulfilment story added to an account of an exorcism. Certainly, as a first century Jew, Jesus may well have regarded pigs as being unclean, at least for food (Lev 11:7). However, as we saw, the rabbinic embargo on raising the animals (*m. B.Qam.* 7.7) was not strictly kept by every Jew (Luke 15:15; *m. 'Uq.* 3.3).

Although we have argued that the story of the Gerasene pigs contains apocryphal elements, it must be conceded that the story was to be found in all three Gospels and, in all three, Jesus is portrayed as acquiescing in the deaths of the animals. Presumably, however, the unanimity is due to dependence on Mark. Yet, if the story is understood as symbolism and not as a literal truth, then we may take a different viewpoint. We have already seen: how the eagle/vulture was perceived symbolically as a 'Divine' bird (Exod 19:4), but literally as a carrion eater (Job 39:30); how the raven was regarded as a unclean bird (Lev 11:15), but also as a symbol of providential care (Luke 12:24); and how the dog was regarded figuratively as a gentile (Mark 7:27), but also as a real animal (Luke 16:21). The tension between the literal and the symbolic is nowhere greater than in the story of the Gerasene pigs. As we saw if we attempt to understand the story literally, we not only come up against the ethical problems of the death of the pigs and the loss of the herdsmen's livelihood, but also the sheer ethological improbability of the account. If however, we look on the destruction of the pigs as symbolism not literalism, then we can have a clearer understanding of what the story was intended to convey to the readers/listeners. Thus, when we understand the destruction of the pigs in this manner, the ethical problem disappears, since there was no literal destruction of two thousand pigs and no loss of livelihood by the herdsmen.

As far as it seems possible to tell from writings derived from oral traditions made years after his death, Jesus was perceived by his followers as having an outlook of compassion which extended to the domestic and working animals. This was an outlook derived from ethical traditions based on Torah, which were largely put into

practice by his fellow countrymen. That Jesus was perceived as being in agreement with such principles may be deduced by the frequent use of these in the *qal wahomer* arguments attributed to him. One example of this being the animal in the pit on the Sabbath (Luke 14:5; Matt 12:11). In the discussion attributed to Jesus, the animal is actually rescued on the Sabbath and not merely given food, then rescued the following day. This principle of 'avoidance of animal suffering' may also have been extended to the Palm Sunday colt. This was the only canonical instance where Jesus is depicted as coming into contact with a living animal and concern for its welfare may be implicit in the promise to return it immediately. That the animal was to be returned as a piece of property is implicit in the promise. The concern for the colt itself would also be consistent with the concept of the 'righteous man' who has concern for the life of his beast (Prov 12:10).

With regard to the wild animals and plants, Jesus was perceived as following the traditions of regarding these as part of creation and under providential care. Observations attributed to him reflect a knowledge of, and interest in, the Living Natural World, an interest which perhaps extended to the eschatological hope of peace with the wild animals and an eventual return to that state of creation, when: '... God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good' (Gen 1:31).

Finally, in the investigation we have made, we have found very little that is pejorative towards the Natural World in the Synoptic gospels. As we have seen the stories of the Gerasene pigs and the cursing of the fig-tree were possible exceptions. However, in relation to the other texts we have examined, we have produced

arguments that indicate that Jesus was perceived as following in the tradition of the *ṣadiq* the righteous man, as obeying the principle of avoiding giving pain to living things, and of living in peace with the wild creatures that were under providential care. For these reasons we conclude that in the main the Synoptic tradition presents Jesus as being sympathetic to the Living Natural World.

Further Research

It is a truism to say that the more we learn, the more we find there is to learn. In the introduction, we compared the work involved to an archaeological trench and so it has proved. While researching material for the thesis, we found that there were areas we could touch on only with tantalising briefness. To take one example, the Synoptic tradition is rich in symbolism with regard to animals and plants and, although we looked at the aspect of symbolism with regard to underlying attitudes to the animals, there is scope for further work. For example, although there have been a few articles written on the subject, there has been (to my knowledge) no work done on animal symbolism, on the scale of Gemünden's work (1993b) on the literary aspect of plants in the New Testament. There is in fact, probably enough material for several works in this area. With regard to domestic animals, the sheep is a prime example of a symbol used extensively in the Synoptic tradition, particularly in Matthew, and also elsewhere in the New Testament. This animal alone would furnish material for such research on symbolism. Other domestic animals and the wild animals (including birds and invertebrates) would provide matter for a detailed literary approach to the symbolism used in the Synoptic tradition. As Gemünden drew upon Hebrew

Scripture in her work, this type of approach could also be taken with similar works on domestic and wild animals.

With respect to fish, there is scope for a literary approach not only to the symbolism of Ἰχθύς but also to the part that fish play in the Gospels. Although Fowler's work (1981) covers the feeding stories, there is still room for a further historical approach to the fishing industry of Galilee and indeed the part that the Sea of Galilee played in the Gospel accounts. Again, from a historical critical approach, there is also the possibility of looking at how attitudes to animals developed in the early Christian church and whether there were any marked differences in approaches. The work by Grant (1999) in this respect is, in essence, an encyclopaedic listing of references with a few brief comments aimed at the general reader. Thus, there is an exciting range of possibilities and approaches to further work on the Natural World in New Testament studies.

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